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Discourse

Diſcourſe LXIX. Mr. *Benj. Calamy.*

On the Lord's Supper.

1 Cor. xi. 29.

For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himſelf, not diſcerning the Lord's body.

THE ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper is undoubtedly the moſt ſolemn part of chriſtian worſhip; an inſtitution of our Saviour's, of mighty uſe and advantage to us, if we duly partake thereof. And yet there is ſcarce any part of religion ſo little underſtood and practiſed by the generality of Chriſtians, as this duty: which ſufficiently appears from the great number of thoſe who conſtantly join in all other offices of divine worſhip, and yet wholly neglect the receiving of this ſacrament, or, at leaſt, communicate but very ſeldom. I do not mean the profane contemners of God and religion, but thoſe who pretend to fear God and value their ſouls, who do yet live in the notorious omiſſion of this duty. And amongſt the many pleas or excuſes with which men ſatisfy themſelves in the neglect or diſuſe of this holy communion, that which moſt generally prevails, and perhaps with ſome honeſt and well-meaning perſons, is the conſideration of St. Paul's words; "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth "and drinketh damnation to himſelf." So dreadful

is the threatning and puniſhment here denounced againſt thoſe who receive this ſacrament unworthily, that men are apt to think it much the ſafer and wiſer courſe, not to venture on a duty, the wrong performance of which is attended with ſo great miſchief. Damnation is ſo terrible a word, and to be guilty of the body and blood of Chriſt is ſo heinous a crime, that it may ſeem moſt prudent for a man to keep himſelf at the greateſt diſtance from all poſſibility of falling into it. I hope therefore, it will be of ſome ſervice to entertain you at this time with a diſcourſe on theſe words; wherein I ſhall endeavour to give you the full meaning of them, together with the true and juſt inferences and conſequences that may be drawn from them. In order to which I ſhall ſhew, what is here meant by damnation; what by "eating and drinking un-"worthily;" how far this text may reaſonably frighten people from this ſacrament; and what conſequences may truly be drawn from theſe words, "he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth "and drinketh damnation to himſelf."

The original word, here tranſlated damnation, ſignifies no more than judgment, or puniſhment in general. So that there is no neceſſity of tranſlating it here by the word damnation; nay, there are two plain reaſons, why it ought to be underſtood only of temporal evils and chaſtiſements. 1. Becauſe the judgments inflicted on the Corinthians, for the profanation of this holy ſacrament, were only temporal. "For this cauſe many are weak and ſickly "among you and many ſleep." 2. Becauſe the reaſon aſſigned for theſe judgments is, "that they "might not be condemned in the other world; but "when we are judged we are chaſtened of the "Lord, that we might not be condemned with the "world." That is, God inflicted theſe evils on the Corinthians, that being reformed by theſe ſtripes

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in this life, they might eſcape hereafter that vengeance which was reſerved for the impenitent; and therefore it could not be eternal damnation, that was either threatned or inflicted upon them for their unworthy receiving. But what the apoſtle means, ſeems to be this, that by profaning this holy ſacrament they would draw down ſome remarkable judgment upon their heads. Of this, ſaith he, you have notorious inſtances among yourſelves, in thoſe various and mortal diſeaſes, that have prevailed in your city, and this God doth to warn you, that you may be awakened to avoid greater or worſe judgments, ſuch as are future and eternal. This puniſhment was extraordinary and peculiar to that time. God doth not now ſuddenly ſmite all unworthy communicants with ſome grievous diſeaſe or ſudden death. Nor indeed are men afraid of any ſuch thing, though it is very plain the apoſtle here means, that by ſuch profaneneſs they would bring down ſome remarkable temporal judgment upon themſelves. I ſhall not inſiſt longer upon this, but take the word damnation as we commonly underſtand it, to ſignify, that by our unworthy participation of the ſacrament, we incur God's heavieſt diſpleaſure, and render ourſelves liable to eternal miſery. And this brings me

To enquire, who thoſe are that run this great danger; namely, they "who eat and drink un-"worthily." As this phraſe of eating unworthily is only found in this chapter, we ought to conſider what the faults were with which the apoſtle chargeth the Corinthians; and we ſhall find them to be very heinous diſorders, that had crept in amongſt them, occaſioned by their love feaſts; at the end of which the Lord's ſupper was uſually celebrated: which diſorders therefore were peculiar to thoſe times, and are not now to be found among us. "Firſt of all (ſays the apoſtle) "when ye come together in the

" church, I hear that there be diviſions among you, " and that in eating every one taketh before ano- " ther his own ſupper." It was a cuſtom when they came to commemorate Chriſt's death, to furniſh a common table, where no man was to pretend any propriety to what he himſelf brought, but he was to eat in common with the reſt; this charitable cuſtom theſe Corinthians wholly perverted. For he that brought a great deal, begun to eat as if it was at his own houſe and table, and ſo fed to the full; whereas another that could bring but a little, remained hungry. With ſuch irreverence and diſorder did they behave at the Lord's table, as if it had been at a common feaſt. This the apoſtle calls " not diſcerning the Lord's body:" That is, they made no difference between that heavenly food, and common bread. They did eat the ſacrament as if it were their ordinary meat. What (ſays he) " have ye not houſes to eat and drink " in?" You may as well ſtay at home, for there is nothing of religion in this; nor is this to celebrate the ſacrament according to Chriſt's inſtitution; whereby we ought to repreſent his death, to commemorate his love, and to devote ourſelves to him in new and better obedience, and not to meet only to fill our bellies. But this was not all; for they were alſo riotous and intemperate in theſe love-feaſts. And this was ſo notorious a profanation of this holy myſtery, in making it an inſtrument of debauchery, that we cannot wonder God ſhould ſo ſeverely threaten and puniſh ſuch open violation of his ſacred ordinance. No judgment could be too great to vindicate our Saviour's moſt excellent inſtitution, from ſuch impious contempt. But then this is not to be extended to every little failure or omiſſion in this duty, or in our preparation for it, as if that did render us ſuch unworthy receivers as

theſe Corinthians were, and inſtantly to conſign us over to the ſame puniſhment.

Thoſe ſcandalous irregularities, here called "eating and drinking unworthily," were heard of only in the firſt ages of the church, when the ſacrament was always joined with theſe love-feaſts, which were therefore afterwards wholly abrogated; and to prevent that intemperance and abuſe they had introduced, it generally prevailed to receive this ſacrament faſting. But whatever faults may be found now amongſt our communicants, yet they cannot be charged with theſe mentioned in this chapter. The worſt of men, if they communicate at all, do it with greater reverence and more ſuitable deportment than theſe Corinthians did. So that neither the fault here reproved, nor the puniſhment denounced, hath place now amongſt us. What reaſon then is there, why this text of ſcripture ſhould frighten any people from the ſacrament, when there is neither the ſame fault committed, nor puniſhment inflicted? But tho' this be the juſt meaning of the words, yet becauſe this plea of unworthineſs to receive is often inſiſted on to excuſe our neglect of this ſacrament, I ſhall farther conſider it under the next head I propoſe to diſcourſe of; which is to ſhew, how far this danger of receiving unworthily may reaſonably frighten people from coming to this ſacrament. And here I ſhall offer theſe few things to the thoughts of all ſuch as are ſeriouſly diſpoſed.

In a ſtrict ſenſe then, we are none of us worthy of ſo great a favour, ſo high a privilege, as to be admitted to this ſacrament. For after all our care, and all our preparation to make ourſelves fit, yet ſtill we muſt acknowledge, that "we are unworthy "even to pick the crumbs that fall from our Maſ-"ter's table," much more to ſit and feaſt at it. If we are not to receive this ſacrament till we think

ourſelves really worthy, the beſt men, the more holy and humble they are, the more averſe would they be from this duty. But,

This unworthineſs is no bar or hindrance to our receiving this ſacrament. We are not worthy of the leaſt mercy, either ſpiritual or temporal, which we enjoy; muſt we therefore ſtarve ourſelves or go naked, becauſe we deſerve not our food or raiment: We are not worthy ſo much as to caſt up our eyes towards heaven, the habitation of God's holineſs; but ſhall we therefore never make our humble addreſſes to the throne of God's grace, becauſe we are not worthy to aſk, or have our petitions heard and granted? Shall we refuſe any favours the kindneſs of heaven offers to us, becauſe they are beyond our merits, or more than we could challenge or expect? It is not ſaid, he that is unworthy to eat and drink of this ſacrament, if he doth eat it, "eateth and drinketh damnation to himſelf;" was it ſo, then indeed we might all be juſtly afraid of coming to this royal feaſt; but it is only ſaid, he that eateth and drinketh unworthily. And there is a great deal of difference between a man's being unworthy to receive this ſacrament, and his receiving it unworthily; which I ſhall thus illuſtrate. He who hath groſly wronged, maliciouſly ſlandered, or without any provocation treated me very ill, all will grant is utterly unworthy of any kindneſs or favour from me. But yet, if notwithſtanding this unworthineſs, I do him ſome conſiderable kindneſs, and offer him ſome favour, his unworthineſs is no hindrance to his receiving it; and if he accepts it with a due ſenſe and a grateful mind, and is thereby moved to lay aſide all his former enmity and animoſity, and heartily repents him of his former ill-will againſt me, and ſtudies how to requite this kindneſs; then, tho' he was unworthy of the favour, yet he hath now received it worthily, that is,

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after a due manner, as he ought to have done; and which hath had its right effect upon him. And thus we are all unworthy to partake of this holy banquet; but being invited and admitted, we may behave ourſelves as becomes us at ſuch a ſolemnity; and if we thankfully commemorate the death of our Lord, renounce all our ſins and former evil ways, give up ourſelves to be governed by him, vow better obedience, and are affected with a true ſenſe of his love; then, though unworthy of ſo great a favour, yet we have worthily, that is, after a right manner (as to God's acceptance) received this bleſſed ſacrament. But if undeſerving of this great honour and favour, we receive it unworthily, that is, after a profane and diſorderly manner, not minding the end, uſe, or deſign of it; without repentance for ſins paſt, or reſolutions of amendment for the future, and without any grateful affection of love towards our Saviour dying for us; then we do by this means highly provoke God, and juſtly incur his diſpleaſure. Indeed,

Thoſe who are unworthy, and truly ſenſible of their own unworthineſs, are the very perſons for whom this ſacrment was appointed, and for whoſe benefit it was inſtituted. Were we not all ſinners we had no need of ſuch means of grace as ſacraments are, nor of ſuch inſtruments of religion. "Chriſt "came not to call the righteous, but ſinners to repen- "tance. They that are whole need not the phyſician, "but they that are ſick." For a man to be afraid to receive an alms, becauſe he is miſerably poor, or to be unwilling to take phyſic, becauſe he is dangerouſly ſick, is very weak. But if we are truly ſenſible of our unworthineſs, and duly affected with it, this is a great argument and motive to engage us not any longer to delay the uſe of theſe means; but to haſten to the ſacrament, there to receive ſupplies and aſſiſtances ſuitable to our wants and neceſſities.

The more unworthy we find ourſelves, the more we ſtand in need of this holy ſacrament, whereby our good reſolutions may be ſtrengthened and confirmed, and divine power and grace communicated, to enable us by degrees to ſubdue all our luſts and paſſions, and to reſiſt all temptations; that ſo by often receiving this ſacrament, we may every time become leſs unworthy to partake of it.

There hath been a great diſpute, whether the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper be a converting ordinance, or no; as prayer and hearing of the word of God read and preached are allowed to be. And there are many who believe, that it is a duty or privilege belonging to none but great and exemplary ſaints, to ſtrong and well grounded chriſtians; that this ſacrament is not food proper for thoſe who often fail in their duty, who are weak in faith, ſtill wreſtling with their luſts, but have not got the maſtery or victory over them. That we ought firſt to be fully aſſured of our ſalvation, before we come to this holy table; that this ordinance ſerves only to ſtrengthen and confirm our faith and repentance, and all other chriſtian graces and virtues, but not to beget them in us. Indeed, it muſt be obſerved, that this ſacrament belongs only to baptized chriſtians, who publicly own their faith and chriſtian profeſſion; that it is no means of converting Jews or Infidels; and that even Chriſtians, by notorious evil lives, whereby they become ſcandalous to their brethren, may juſtly forfeit all their right and title to this ſacrament; nay farther, that it is a bold profanation of our Saviour's inſtitution, for any wicked perſon, reſolved to continue ſuch, to preſume to bleſs God for that mercy and love of a redeemer which he doth not in the leaſt value. Thus far we are all agreed; but then I can ſee no reaſon, why to

one

one that is really ſenſible of his ſins and miſcarriages, and makes ſome kind of reſolution to forſake them; why this ſacrament, as well as prayer, or any other duties of religion, may not be reckoned as a means of begetting true repentance in him, of turning him from ſin to righteouſneſs, from the power of Satan to God; and for this plain reaſon, becauſe if the death of Chriſt itſelf, his bitter paſſion, his whole gracious undertaking for us, was deſigned by God to convince us of the evil and danger of ſin, to make us out of love with it, and to engage us to a new and better life; ſure then the conſideration of the ſame things repreſented to us in the ſacrament, the commemoration of his death and paſſion there made, may alſo ſerve for the ſame great ends and purpoſes.

If Chriſt died that we ſhould die unto ſin, certainly then the memory of his death may juſtly be accounted a proper means of killing ſin in us; nay, what in the nature of the thing can be imagined a more likely inſtrument to turn us from a life of ſin to the practice of holineſs, than the frequent conſideration of what our bleſſed Lord hath done and ſuffered for us? And if ſo, it cannot be neceſſary that the change ſhould be compleatly wrought in us, before we ever ſolemnly commemorate his bloody paſſion; for that were to ſuppoſe it neceſſary that the end ſhould be obtained before we uſe the means. It is not therefore abſolutely neceſſary that we ſhould be fully aſſured that we are in a ſtate of grace, in God's favour, and have truly repented and forſaken all our ſins, before we venture to receive this ſacrament; it is ſufficient that we heartily and ſincerely reſolve againſt them, that we approach the Lord's table with honeſt and devout minds, that we be really willing and deſirous

to

to uſe all means to become better: And if thus diſpoſed we come to the ſacrament, I doubt not but we ſhall find it a moſt effectual means for the enabling us to forſake our ſins, and to lead a better life. It is not our unworthineſs, but our reſolving to contiue in that ſtate, that makes us unqualified for this ſacrament.

If therefore by unworthineſs we mean that we are reſolved to live in ſin, and ſo dare not come to the ſacrament for fear we ſhould farther provoke God; even ſuppoſing this to be acting prudently and warily, yet then I would adviſe ſuch for the ſame reaſon, to leave off all other duties of religion as well as this; for if they would act upon the ſame grounds, they ought to think it the ſafeſt way never to pray to God any more, nor ever again to appear in any religious aſſemblies, nor to join in any part of God's ſolemn worſhip; for God hath often declared, that he doth far more abominate all ſuch formal hypocrites, and will more ſeverely puniſh them, than the open bold contemners of his authority and laws. "The prayer of the wicked man "is an abomination to the Lord." He hates the addreſſes of thoſe who call him Father and Maſter, and in words acknowledge him, but yet continually do the things that are diſpleaſing in his ſight. He rejects all the ſervices of impure worſhippers: For ſuch do but mock God, and impudently flatter him, when they preſent themſelves before him, as his ſervants, and yet ſecretly hate him. Nay, for the ſame reaſon they forbear the ſacrament, they ſhould lay aſide their whole Chriſtian profeſſion, openly renounce their baptiſm, deny their Saviour, and diſown his religion, for that is the ſafeſt courſe, whilſt they reſolve to continue in ſin and diſobedience; for God's wrath ſhall in the firſt place be executed againſt wicked Chriſtians, who were called by Chriſt's name, and yet

did

did not depart from iniquity. If ſuch go out of the church when the ſacrament is to be adminiſtered, thinking leſt they ſhould farther provoke God by unworthy receiving it; for the ſame reaſon let them keep from the church altogether, leſt they as highly provoke God by being preſent at thoſe prayers they do not heartily join in, nor ever intend to live according to them. Alas! ſuch need not be afraid of this text; it ſeems indifferent to them whether they receive or not. Damnation cannot be ſuppoſed to frighten him from the ſacrament, who runs the conſtant hazard of it by living in a known ſin. This can be no ſuch terrible word to an habitual and reſolved ſinner. He that can ſwear and talk profanely, live intemperately and looſely, and without any fear or regret commit ſin, in vain pretends fear of damnation, for not doing that which is indeed his duty; for it is moſt ridiculous to be afraid of doing what our Saviour hath commanded, when we are not in the leaſt afraid every day to do what he hath forbidden. How ſtrange is it for men, out of a dread of damnation, to neglect the ſacrament, and yet at the ſame time not to be afraid to live carnal and ſenſual lives? Their conſtant practice confutes this pretence, by their notoriouſly breaking his laws, violating his authority, and ſcandalizing his religion. They pretend fear of damnation; but the true reaſon of their abſtaining from this ſacrament is, they are afraid that it will engage them to leave thoſe ſins they have no mind to part with; and put them upon the practice of thoſe duties which are inconſiſtent with their profit, pleaſure, or ſecular intereſt. Such are not afraid of diſpleaſing God, but of being too ſtrictly tied and bound to pleaſe him: they fear leſt that ſolemnity ſhould raiſe ſome ſcruples in their minds, which

which they have no leiſure to conſider of; they would not be troubled with ſuch a ſerious buſineſs, thinking they ſhall not be able to ſin ſo ſecurely and quietly after it as they now do. Let not ſuch therefore as neglect this duty, invent any ſuch poor excuſes, but confeſs plainly, that they love ſin and the world, more than the benefits purchaſed by Jeſus Chriſt; that they reſolve to continue in their wickedneſs, and therefore will not come to this ſacrament. This is the ſecret thought of many men, though a very fooliſh one; for they are much miſtaken, who think themſelves at greater liberty to do evil, whilſt they abſtain from this ſacrament: Since Chriſtians are engaged by receiving this ſacrament to no other obedience than they were before by their baptiſm; it doth not ſo much oblige us to new duties, as engage us to make good thoſe obligations, which our profeſſion of chriſtianity hath already laid upon us. Laſtly,

If the receiving this ſacrament was an indifferent rite and ceremony, that might be done or omitted at pleaſure, then indeed the great danger there is in receiving it unworthily, might, in ſome meaſure juſtify our omiſſion of it: But what if the danger be as great, and the hazard equal, of not receiving it at all, as of receiving it unworthily? Where then is our prudence or ſafety, when to avoid one danger we run into another equally great, and when for fear of diſpleaſing God, we diſobey a plain command? It is not very eaſy to determine which is the greateſt affront to God, or doth moſt highly provoke him, never to perform our duty, or to perform it after a wrong manner; never to pray at all, or to be preſent at prayers, but not to mind or regard what we are about; never to receive this ſacrament, or to receive it often, but make no difference between what we eat and drink there, and what we do at our own houſes.

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However, he that receives this ſarament, although it be after an undue manner, ſeems to me to ſhew ſomewhat more reſpect to God and his commands, than he who wholly neglects it. And beſides, there is hardly any wicked man, that dares come to the ſacrament without ſome good thoughts and reſolutions; or who is not for a little time before and after the receiving of it, more careful of himſelf and his actions: and tho' this may not laſt long, but he ſoon returns to his former wickedneſs, yet this is ſomething better than continuing in ſin and wickedneſs without any intermiſſion or ceſſation. For ſuch an one uſes the beſt means of becoming better, which by God's grace may prove effectual; but he that caſts off all theſe duties, is in a moſt deſperate and irreclaimable ſtate. In ſhort, were there neither ſin nor danger in omitting this ſacrament, and ſo great hazard in receiving it unworthily, prudence and intereſt might engage us to chuſe the ſafeſt ſide, and not to meddle with it at all; but if we expoſe ourſelves as certainly to God's anger and diſpleaſure, by wholly neglecting this duty, then theſe words of the apoſtle can be no pretence or excuſe for our abſtaining from the communion. For, becauſe intemperate eating and drinking is very prejudicial to our health, and often breads mortal diſeaſes, is it therefore better never to eat or drink at all? Would it not be madneſs, leſt we ſhould kill ourſelves by a ſurfeit, to reſolve to ſtarve ourſelves by obſtinate faſting? This brings me to the laſt thing I propoſed to conſider, which was

To ſhew what is the true and juſt conſequence of theſe words of the apoſtle; "he that eateth and "drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damna-"tion to himſelf." And ſince our Saviour hath plainly commanded all his followers and diſciples

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to do this in remembrance of him, and yet there is ſo great danger in doing it unworthily, we ſhould then reſolve, neither to omit the duty, (for that would be a plain tranſgreſſion of our Saviour's command) nor yet be careleſs in the performance of it. And this is the inference which the apoſtle himſelf makes; not that the Corinthians, whom he blames for their unworthy receiving this ſacrament, ſhould forbear coming to it any more, but that for the future they ſhould examine themſelves, and partake of it with greater reverence and devotion than they uſed to do. Let the danger of receiving unworthily be never ſo great, this ought only to make us ſo much the more careful to receive it after a right and acceptable manner, and to put us upon greater watchfulneſs over ourſelves for the future. The uſe we ſhould make of theſe words, is not raſhly, without due preparation or conſideration to ruſh upon this holy ſacrament, but ſeriouſly to mind the end and deſign of it; and ſo duly to affect our ſpirits with the things here repreſented, that they may make lively and laſting impreſſions upon us, and we may bring forth the fruit of an holy and unblamable converſation.

To conclude, I would not have any thing I have now ſaid, ſo interpreted or underſtood, as in the leaſt to take away from the reverence we ſhould have of this inſtitution; or to leſſen the awe and dread of receiving it unworthily. I would not have men afraid of, or ſcruple doing their duty. A due preparation and good diſpoſitions of mind are required for prayer, and the right performance of other religious duties as well as this of the ſacrament. We ought therefore only to be afraid of theſe things. Of neglecting to receive this ſacrament, for that is to live in diſ-

obedience

obedience to a plain command of our Saviour; of receiving it unworthily without reverence or attention to the meaning of it, or without hearty repentance and ſincere reſolution of amendment; for that is to affront and profane our Saviour's moſt excellent inſtitution; and of turning to our evil courſes after receiving it, for then our having taken this ſacrament will be a greater aggravation both of our ſin and condemnation.

Diſcourſe LXX. Dr. *Rogers.*

Of the FEAR of GOD.

Pſal. xxxv. 8.

Let all the earth fear the Lord; ſtand in awe of him, all ye that dwell in the world.

OUR paſſions are the ſprings which actuate the powers of our nature. And ſince the fear of God is a paſſion of the firſt and principal influence in religion, it is of the greateſt importance that we rightly underſtand the nature of it.—Fear in general is that paſſion, whereby we are excited to provide for our ſecurity, upon the approach of evil. Not that God can be the author of evil; for his ſevereſt inflictions are acts of juſtice and righteouſneſs, and flow from the perfections of his nature; but with reſpect to us, they have the evil of puniſhment, and demand our fear. The frequent miſtakes of men, as to this object of their fear, and the reſpect due to God, has occaſioned the diſtinction of a ſervile or ſuperſtitious, and a filial or religious fear. The former is a diſhonour to God; the latter we are in duty obliged to, as it is the ſpring and motive of our obedience. To repreſent the divine nature, as a being averſe to our happineſs, and armed with power only to deſtroy; as an auſtere, rigorous maſter, eaſily provoked and always ready to take vengeance, muſt naturally raiſe in our minds a dread of, and averſion to him. But ſuch a fear is not

not required by God. This the devils do, who believe and tremble. This is like that forced reſpect which a captive pays to his conqueror, or ſlave to his lord. But ſuch apprehenſions of the divine nature, are a blaſphemous affront to his perfections.

The fear which is acceptable to God, is a filial, religious fear. An awful reverence of the divine nature, proceeding from a juſt eſteem and regard to his perfections, which produces in us an inclination to his ſervice, and an unwillingneſs to offend him. This is a duty which all inferiors owe to their ſuperiors; a reſpect which implies a mixture of love and fear. For tho' religion demands our reverence to God, as that ſovereign power from whom we derive our being, the judge of our actions, the author and diſpoſer of our happineſs; and repreſents him adorned with majeſty and honour, to whoſe authority all things in heaven and earth do bow and obey; yet it teaches us alſo to adore him as a mild and merciful Being, of infinite love and affection to his creatures, as a tender father who ſupplies our wants and defends our impotence; to whoſe favour we owe all our preſent happineſs, and from whoſe compaſſion in Chriſt, we hope for eternal glory. This is God's proper character, whoſe goodneſs forbids us to dread him as ſlaves, tho' his majeſty commands us to reverence him as ſons. But yet there is a very neceſſary fear of God, which attends the conſcience of a ſinner converted from a courſe of wickedneſs; which fear in its firſt impreſſions muſt be attended with uncomfortable views of the divine nature, till God's anger be appeaſed, and he reconciled to the ſinner upon his repentance; this the ſchools call an initial fear of God, a diſpoſition of mind no way offenſive to him, but what ſeems very proper for a broken and contrite heart, labouring under the conviction of ſin, to be poſſeſſed of when he looks upon God as his judge. The nature of the

fear of God being thus explained, I will propoſe ſome conſiderations, that may be neceſſary to raiſe in us ſuitable affections of fear towards the deity.

And every one of the divine perfections are proper arguments for this reverence towards God. For can we reflect on his infinite knowledge and omnipreſence, and not ſtand in awe of that Being, who ſees our failings and infirmities, is about our bed and path, obſerves and records every word and action of our lives, and from whom our moſt ſecret thoughts and intentions are not concealed? His infinite juſtice muſt alſo give us a religious concern, for the event of that day, when we muſt appear in judgment before God's imperial tribunal. His goodneſs, holineſs and mercy, tho' the immediate objects of our love, yet when we conſider the nature of theſe qualities in God; that the heavens are not pure in his ſight, and that he charges even the angels with folly; this will teach us to bow our ſouls with lowly reverence before ſo excellent a Being, and adore his divine perfections. But the attribute which more eſpecially demands this affection from us, is his power; for none can reſiſt or interrupt the execution of his will. Our happineſs and miſery, our ſouls and bodies are in his hands; he has power to ſave and deſtroy, nor is he accountable to any one for it. If he is angry, unleſs his wrath be appeaſed, he is ready to execute his vengeance, with an eternity of torments. And tho' a juſt confidence in his goodneſs, ſhould prefer us from a ſervile dread of his power, or deſpair of his mercy; yet ſo unlimitted, irreſiſtable an authority cannot be reflected on, without the moſt aweful reverence, even by thoſe, whoſe piety aſſures them of his favour.—But theſe arguments will be ye more effectual, if we alſo reflect with a juſt humility on ourſelves. That we are indigent, defenceleſs beings, the creatures of his power, the dependance of his

his providence; whoſe ſtrength is weakneſs, and whoſe wiſdom is but folly. And what is yet much worſe, we have provoked this almighty power by our ſins, affronted his goodneſs, deſpiſed his laws, and rebelled againſt his authority. And if prophets and apoſtles with reverence fell down at the feet of his angels; if Moſes, tho' honoured with the character of God's friend, was ſtruc with exceeding fear and trembling at the glory of his perfections; if the holy angels veil their faces and bow down before his majeſty; with what awe and reverence ſhould we ſinful duſt and aſhes, approach that infinite power we have ſo highly offended; and with what profound humility implore his pardon?

And as the fear of the Lord is a ſtrong confidence to good men, a ſure refuge to his children, and the beſt preſervative from all thoſe temporal fears that diſquiet and embitter the lives of men; ſo the malice or power, the wills and paſſions of men, are to be conſidered as only inſtruments in God's hands, and no farther to be feared, than as made uſe of by him to puniſh us.

The effect of this fear ſhould influence us to a ſincere, univerſal obedience to all the commands of God. But then let it be obſerved, that if our obſervance of the divine laws proceeds merely from an opinion of God's deſign to make us happy; then when his providence or juſtice thinks fit to afflict us, he will no longer appear that kind benevolent being we before worſhipped; conſequently, the motive of our ſubmiſſion will loſe its force. Indeed, were the divine laws propoſed to us with no other motive than the advantages attending it, they would have a very weak influence on the greateſt part of mankind; who are more inclined to purſue their happineſs, in the ſatisfactions of this life, than to wait for diſtant promiſes: 'Tis therefore neceſſary to engage alſo the fears of men, by annexing

ſuch penalties as will over-balance the perſuaſions of temporal pleaſure.

On the other hand, if our obedience be only a dread of God's power and vengeance, it would be no better than the ſubmiſſion of a ſlave, to the tyranny of an inſolent maſter; and muſt want that affection which alone can make our obedience acceptable. As God requires ſubmiſſion to his laws, ſo he expects it to be accompanied with an intire truſt in his goodneſs and love to his ſervice; by the former we adore him as our Lord and governor, by the latter as our father which is in heaven. The proper motive therefore of our chriſtian obedience is, that fear which is perfected by love; that filial reverence before deſcribed and recommended, which has a mixture of both theſe affections, and acts upon our lives with equal force. This is a principle adapted to every paſſion and faculty of our nature, to every ſtate and condition of life; and when rightly framed will direct us to the due performance of all our duties, and equally prepare our patience for the day of adverſity, or engage our gratitude for God's mercies; it will ſuggeſt tears to our repentance, hallelujahs to our praiſe, make us receive his favours as the bleſſings, or his puniſhments as the corrections of a father. The awe of his majeſty will keep us from preſumption, the promiſes of his mercy from deſpair. If this principle was fully fixed in the minds of men, we ſhould be aſhamed of hypocriſy and tremble at profaneneſs. Our ſecret actions would be as regular as our public; our devotions as great in the cloſet as in the temple. The leaſt of God's commands would appear venerable to us, and the moſt difficult not grievous. This affection will give warmth to our zeal, and ſpirit to our devotions; it will animate our faith, enliven our hope, extend our charity, deter us from ſin, and encourage us in our duty.

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As this is the true principle of Chriſtian obedience, the only foundation on which religion ſtands, we muſt labour to form in our minds ſuch juſt apprehenſions of the deity, as may poſſeſs our ſouls with reverence towards him. Such as are our conceptions of God, ſuch will be our affections to him; and ſuch as is the affection of the heart, ſuch will be the ſervice and obedience of our lives. We muſt take care not to affront the Almighty by want of reverence, nor yet diſhonour his goodneſs by a ſervile dread of his power: Both are defects equally deſtructive of true religion; the one tending to extinguiſh it by a contempt of God, the other to corrupt it by ſuperſtition. As the reflection on his goodneſs ſhould reconcile us with delight to the duties he enjoins; ſo muſt we remember alſo to ſerve him with fear. When we contemplate the wonders of his love, we muſt not forget the honour due to his majeſty, but rejoice before him with reverence; and while we approach him with the confidence of ſons, we muſt humble ourſelves to him with the reſignation of creatures, and the contrition of ſinners.

And let us not be diſcouraged, if our converſion from a ſtate of ſin be attended with terrible apprehenſions of God's ſeverity and power, ſince this is not that ſlaviſh dread which deſtroys religion, but the beginning of wiſdom; an impreſſion, if duly cultivated, that will end with confidence in the mercy, and with pleaſure in the ſervice of God. The divine nature will gradually appear more amiable; the mercy of his pardon will endear him to us, and we ſhall love much, for having much forgiven. Let us then be careful ſo to fear God here, that we may behold him without dread and aſtoniſhment hereafter: That we may ſtand before our judge at his aweful tribunal, when the ſinner ſhall deſire the mountains to fall on him, and the hills to

cover him from the terrors of his preſence; that we may be able to approach the throne of his majeſty with the confidence of ſons, and be received among the redeemed of the Lord, into that eternal ſtate of happineſs, where all our fears and labours ſhall ceaſe; where everlaſting love and peace ſhall be our employment and reward.

From what has been ſaid we may obſerve, that the fear of God is the foundation of religion. But tho' virtue is in its own nature amiable, and that the world could be ſuppoſed to ſubſiſt without the being and government of God, as the nature of good and evil would be ſtill the ſame; yet the great ſupport of virtue among men, is the ſenſe upon their minds of a ſupreme governor and judge of the univerſe, who will finally reward what is eſſentially worthy of reward; and puniſh what deſerves puniſhment. To a perfect unerring mind, who is exalted above all temptation; to ſuch an one the reaſons of things, the excellency of truth and right, is always a ſufficient motive of action. But men, who when they know, and approve of what is right, yet at the ſame time find another law in their members, warring againſt the law of their mind, urging them with ſtrong paſſions and unruly appetites; who are alſo perpetually tempted with allurements of pleaſure and profit, with baits of power and ambition, with examples of a degenerate and corrupt world: To ſuch infinite, changeable, and fallible creatures as theſe, 'tis very neceſſary, that the eternal reaſon of things, that the excellency of truth and right, conſidered as a motive of action, ſhould be ſupported by a conſtant and lively ſenſe upon their minds, of an univerſal, ſupreme governor, the fountain of all perfection; who will as ſurely reward and puniſh vice, as it is certain that there is a difference between good and evil. And a firm perſuaſion of the reality of this great truth,

that

that we are continually under the inſpection of ſuch a ſupreme governor and judge, in whom we live, move, and have our being, and who knows our very thoughts as well as actions; cannot but poſſeſs the mind of every conſiderate perſon, with a juſt awe and fear of him; "when I conſider I am afraid of "him." Afraid, not as of an arbitrary and tyrannical power; but as of a juſt, powerful, and wiſe governor, whoſe laws are reaſonable and neceſſary to be obeyed, and from whoſe juſt diſpleaſure none can be protected.

The true ground of this fear is reaſon and conſideration; and yet profane atheiſtical men ſuppoſe this fear proceeds from timorouſneſs of temper, ſuperſtition, tradition, or political fiction. It will be therefore of great moment to determine, which of theſe two is the truth. For this reaſon, I will diſtinctly conſider the different grounds, characters and effects of religion and ſuperſtition. And firſt,

As to the ground and foundation of religion: That there is an eſſential difference between good and evil, virtue and vice, every man as clearly diſcerns by the natural perceptions of his own mind and conſcience, as his eyes ſee the difference between light and darkneſs. 'Tis not a man's parcular timorouſneſs of temper, nor cuſtomary tradition from his anceſtors, nor the imaginary ſpeculation of philoſophers, nor the political fiction of governors, that makes him ſee when he is oppreſt, defrauded, cheated, and ill treated; that theſe actions are, in their own nature unrighteous, and the perſon guilty of them, worthy of puniſhment, every man of any capacity, age, and nation, knows to be true in the nature of things; and that no variety of temper, no tradition, no philoſophy, or form of goverment can alter or aboliſh theſe notions. The reaſonings and ſpeculations of men do

not change the nature of things:—Nor do laws make virtue to be virtue, nor vice to be vice; but only enforce or diſcourage ſuch things, as were of themſelves fit or unfit, before the making of the law. Was there in nature no real and unalterable difference between moral good and evil, it would follow, that whole nations might poſſibly, and with a full inward perſuaſion, determine virtue to be vice, and vice to be virtue, as we think we with reaſon determine the contrary? Nay, 'tis as eaſy and as natural they ſhould ſo determine, as for nations to differ in the faſhion or colour of their clothes, or in any other indifferent circumſtances. So that it is undeniably true, that the firſt ground and foundation of religion, the eſſential difference between virtue and vice, is laid in the nature and reaſon of things; whereas all ſuperſtitions, various as the motion of winds and clouds, are founded in accidental temper, tradition, or political fiction. Again,

That there is an inviſible power preſiding over the univerſe, (which is another prime part of the foundation of religion) finally to ſupport virtue and puniſh wickedneſs, is a belief ariſing from reaſon and conſideration, and directly contrary to ſuperſtition. The more extenſive any man's obſervations are, the more evidences will he find, of the reality and greatneſs of this invincible power; even to the meaneſt capacities God has not left himſelf without witneſs: The wonderful works of nature, the regularity and uniformity of them, ſhew the greatneſs of this power, acting and directing every where. And this univerſal governor, who directs the whole frame of nature, cannot be inſenſible of the difference between moral good and evil. To expect therefore that this ſupreme being will judge according to right, or the neceſſary nature of things; or, in other words, to fear that he will puniſh us if we act unreaſonably, and to hope for his favour, if we

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follow truth and right, is the voice of reaſon and not ſuperſtition.

Superſtitious apprehenſions, ariſing from timorouſneſs of temper, teach men to be afraid of God, they know not why; to fear him, not as a juſt and righteous judge, but merely as veſted with irreſiſtible power; to fear him, not ſo as to be thereby deterred from wicked practices, but ſo as to be perpetually commuting for a vicious life, with the repetition of unprofitable ceremonies without number. Superſtition, founded upon tradition, teach men to be afraid of things or beings that have no exiſtence, no power and dominion over us; to place religion in practices which have no tendency to virtue; to rely upon opinions and things that have no ſenſe or truth in them; ſo that no rational account or anſwer can be given by ſuch, to any one that "aſketh a reaſon of the hope, or the fear, "that is in him." Superſtitions derived from political fiction, make religion to conſiſt in parties and factions, in things contrary to each other in different countries, and in the ſame country at different times; and ſometimes in things deſtructive both of truth and charity.

Thus did the heathen world ſuperſtitiouſly worſhip falſe deities, inſtead of the great God and governor of the univerſe; mixing barbarous, cruel, and impure rites among their religious performances. The general ſuperſtition of the Jews, was their relying on outward forms and ceremonies (which indeed ought not to be left undone) but they laid the ſtreſs of religion upon them, more than upon the weightier matters of the law, juſtice, mercy, and fidelity; of which all external purifications were but ſhadows and memorials. In the Chriſtian world we have no leſs ſhameful inſtances of ſuperſtition: Some men inſtead of worſhipping him "that "made heaven and earth," ſetting up the worſhip

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of the hoſt, of the bleſſed virgin, of angels, of ſaints, of relics, and images; alſo relying upon indulgencies, pilgrimages, proceſſions, maſſes for the dead, and the like; and practiſing the moſt inhuman perſecutions and barbarities under pretences of religion; all which things are deſtitute of reaſon, or any command of God. The true religion of Chriſt has nothing of this in it; his religion only requires of us a reaſonable ſervice, that in expectation of a judgment to come, we continually worſhip the God of the univerſe; that we live in ſobriety, righteouſneſs, and charity towards all men; and make conſtant acknowledgments of the divine goodneſs and mercy, in receiving ſinners to repentance, thro' the atonement and interceſſion of Chriſt. A doctrine this moſt firm in its foundation, and moſt excellent in its effects.—And as religion and ſuperſtition entirely differ in their ground and foundation, ſo do they in their effects: "By their fruits ye ſhall "know them." Religion, which is founded in truth, always makes men impartial and inquiſitive after truth; lovers of reaſon, meek, gentle, patient, willing to be informed; ſuperſtition, on the contrary, naturally makes men blind and paſſionate, deſpiſers of reaſon, careleſs in ſeeking after truth, cenſorious, contentious, and impatient of inſtruction. Religion teaches men to be exactly juſt, equitable, and charitable; but ſuperſtition, on the contrary, frequently puts men upon undervaluing the eternal rules of morality, preferring ſects and parties, uncertain opinions and needleſs ceremonies, before the unalterable precepts of the everlaſting law and goſpel. True religion, the religion of nature and of Chriſt, by ſecuring the belief of a future judgment, tends to promote the happineſs of nations and good government, in obliging men to real fidelity and juſtice, and the ſincere practice of every virtue, which human laws can but imperfect-

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ly ſecure: But ſuperſtition, on the contrary, frequently produces wars and tumults, perſecutions and tyrannies without end; there being nothing ſo wicked, which men of ſuperſtitious principles will not think pious and neceſſary, and men of no principles will not ſubmit to.

I ſhall conclude with obſerving, that the true religion taught by Chriſt, (for the religon profeſſed by many nations is nothing but ſuperſtition) has been objected to in two particulars, as encouraging ſuperſtition, by men who recieve not the goſpel; one is, that it teaches men to be obſtinate and wilful, in parting with all advantages, even life itſelf, for the ſake of religion: The other is, that by teaching men to deſpiſe the world, it hinders them from attending to the public good. The anſwer to this is not difficult; without a ſtedfaſtneſs not to be moved by temporal inconveniencies, there is no virtue to be depended upon in natural religion, any more than in the Chriſtian. Is therefore all virtue nothing but ſuperſtition? And as to the deſpiſing the world, ſo as to withdraw from buſineſs; chriſtianity no where teaches this, except in times of general perſecution. In other caſes, deſpiſing the world does not ſignify the ſlighting of buſineſs, or neglecting the public good; but deſpiſing all temptations to the wickedneſs of the world, the temptations of lawleſs pleaſure, the temptations of unjuſt gains and corrupt ambition; theſe only are, in ſcripture ſenſe, that world which is an enemy to God, and therefore what we ought to deſpiſe.

Diſcourſe LXXI. Dr. *Rogers.*

The DUTY of TRUSTING in GOD.

Jerem. xvii. 7.

Bleſſed is he that truſteth in the Lord, and whoſe hope the Lord is.

TRUST in God is a duty we owe him as our creator, and the ſupreme governor of the world; and it is a great degree of idolatry to place it on any other being. This duty implies an intire reſignation to the wiſdom, a dependance on the power, and a firm aſſurance of the goodneſs and veracity of God. On him we muſt rely to ſupply us with all things needful and proper; to give food to our bodies, pardon and grace to our ſouls. Should our temporal projects be full of danger, or the days of ſorrow actually overtake us, yet we muſt ſtill repoſe ourſelves on God, who loves us as his children; and when he corrects us, does it with the mercy of a father; and will, in the end, make all things work together for our good. "Tho' he ſlay me, ſays Job, yet will I truſt in "him." Nay, if we have offended him by our ſins, provoked him to withdraw the comforts of his Holy Spirit, and to hide his face from us; yet ſtill we muſt place our whole truſt in him, and depend on the promiſes he has made thro' Chriſt, that that he will forgive the truly penitent, and again receive him to mercy and favour.

This duty alſo implies, that we ſhould not confide in any inferior beings. In order to this, we muſt put off all truſt in ourſelves, in our parts, abi-

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lities, or acquiſitions, how great ſoever they may be; nor yet, ſolely confide in the friendſhip, aſſiſtance, or ſervices of other men. For no man, how mighty, good, or virtuous ſo ever he is, muſt be ſuffered to rival God, as to our truſt and confidence in him. For the Holy Spirit hath pronounced him accurſed, "who truſteth in man, and "maketh fleſh his arm, and whoſe heart departeth "from the Lord." And tho' the bleſſed angels far excel man in power and wiſdom, and whoſe goodneſs and benevolence towards us we may be aſſured of, yet we muſt not truſt in them; becauſe theſe glorious beings are to be conſidered as our fellow ſervants, and only inſtruments in the hand of God, who governs all their actions, diſpoſes their wills and affections, according to his good pleaſure. But to place our confidence in bad men or evil ſpirits, is the higheſt offence againſt this duty. If we pay this regard to the angels of God, we become guilty criminals, in honouring the ſervant, tho' of great dignity, before the maſter; but to have recourſe to the powers of darkneſs, we aſſociate with profeſſed rebels againſt God and Chriſt, and deliberately renounce our allegiance to both. For tho' we are permitted to cultivate the friendſhip, and engage the benevolence of men and angels, yet our confidence muſt terminate in God, from whoſe bounty we receive, and at whoſe pleaſure we enjoy every bleſſing; whoſe appointment every creature, good or evil, is bound to obey, who only is the mighty Lord, that hath power to ſave and to deſtroy. But it will be proper to conſider, when this truſt is well founded, and what is required from us to aſſure our confidence and reliance on the favour and protection of God.

For, with reſpect to the duty of prayer, the proper means of obtaining the bleſſings we truſt in God for; as there are certain qualifications on our parts

parts neceſſary to render our prayers ſucceſsful; ſo likewiſe, thro' our truſting in God, be an homage due from us to him, as his ſubjects and creatures, yet unleſs we are duly qualified for his favour, our truſt will be a vain and ſinful preſumption. The great and important qualification for our ſucceſs in theſe duties, is a ſincere obedience to the laws of God, an unfeigned devotion of the heart, a ſteady adherence to the faith, purity and holineſs of life, a greeable to the precepts of our religion. We muſt examine our lives, and be aſſured that our ways pleaſe the Lord, before we can hope for his favourable interpoſition: "For his eyes are over the righteous, "and his ears are open to their prayers; but the "ungodly, and him that delighteth in wickedneſs, doth his ſoul abhor. If our heart con-"demns us not, then have we confidence towards "God." But if our conſcience reproach us with unmortified ſin; if we have neglected God's ſervice, and deſpiſed his authority, all our hope will be that of an hypocrite; we may call, but none will anſwer; and no other refuge remains to the ſinner, but to put away the evil of his doings, and humble himſelf by a ſpeedy and ſincere repentance: and if he returns to God whom he has forſaken, God will return and take him again into his protection; he will be reconciled to him thro' Chriſt, and reſtore him to the confidence of a ſon.

Would we draw an abſtract of human happineſs, and give a minute deſcription of it, we muſt fix on the wiſe and religious ſhort ſentence in the text as the ſum of all; "bleſſed is he that truſteth in the "Lord, and whoſe hope the Lord is." Every other ſcheme we can form, will, upon examination, appear weak and defective, perplexed and intricate; full of difficulties in the execution, and precarious in the iſſue; depending for ſucceſs on beings frail in

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their nature, confined in their power, or uncertain in their will and inclinations: And if any of theſe fail us, our ſcheme is broken; the pains we have taken, the ſkill and addreſs we have ſhewn in the attempt, are all loſt, leaving us nothing but diſappointment and deſpair. But he who can reaſonably confide and truſt in God, is ſecure from theſe contingencies. He relies on infinite wiſdom, goodneſs and power, which nothing can obſtruct; a God who has promiſed never to fail thoſe who truſt on him; and if he be with us, who or what can be againſt us. But then if he be angry; all our other dependencies will not avail us; our ſtrength will be weakneſs, and our wiſdom folly; every other ſupport will diſappoint and deceive us, in the day we want it moſt. And,

If our enquiry be only after preſent felicity, how much better is it ſecured to that man who truſts in God, than to him who depends on the creature? The hope of the former is founded on a rock, his ſoul dwells at eaſe, ſecure in the power and affection of his governor, calm and unconcerned in his purſuits. He commits the event to God, who perfectly knows, and is both able and willing to do what is beſt for him. He chearfully and contentedly enjoys his preſent bleſſings, without any ſollicitude for the future. If things happen contrary to his expectations, he conſiders that it is the allotment of infinite wiſdom and goodneſs, and therefore ſubmits to the diſappointment without murmuring. In times of danger his heart ſtandeth faſt, neither fearing the rage of men, nor the malice of devils; knowing that all things are under the direction of him, whoſe power ruleth over all; who can in a moment reſtrain their wills, and with his favourable kindneſs defend him as with a ſhield: Nay, in the ſevereſt afflictions, he is full of comfort; he knows that all the powers on earth or in hell cannot

cannot diſtreſs him beyond God's ability to deliver him, nor exclude them from his preſence, or prevent his having recourſe to God. He conſiders that God does not willingly grieve his creatures, but has wiſe and gracious ends in all his diſpenſations, tho' they may not preſently appear ſo to us. He believes that God afflicts him either to exerciſe and improve his virtue, his patience and fortitude; or to convey thereby ſome other advantage of greater value; ſo that he relies on his God either to remove the burden, or to enable him to bear it, or to make him amends for what he ſuffers.

But how different from this is he, who truſts in the creature? Uneaſineſs and vexation attend him in every ſtage and event of life; for he is in perpetual fear, leſt thoſe he relies on ſhould deceive, or be diſabled from ſerving him. And when danger becomes imminent and ready to fall upon him, he then finds the vanity of his confidence; fearfulneſs and trembling ſeize him; he is diſtracted, irreſolute, and diffident of every recourſe. But when the day of adverſity actually overtakes him, he is then completely miſerable; he flies from one dependance to another, but finds all either weak or treacherous. The riches and honours in which he gloried avail him nothing; and even the friend on whom he moſt relied, proves falſe and forſakes him, or looks on with an uſeleſs pity, and cannot help him. "He is like a man diſtreſſed with thirſt in "the parched places of the wilderneſs, in a ſalt land "and not inhabited." He ſearches every pit, but finds no water; cries for help, but none can hear him; ſo that defeated and overwhelmed with trouble, he ſinks into dejection, and all his hopes end in deſpair. This is the man who has not God for his hope, but truſteth in the multitude of his riches, and ſtrengthens himſelf in his ungodlineſs. Thus weakly provided with regard to temporal happi-

happineſs; thus fooliſh and miſerable, in compariſon with him whoſe truſt is in God. If we alſo conſider their different conditions with reſpect to futurity; here the worlding gives up the argument, and will not diſpute the advantage of religion. All his ſchemes terminate in things temporal; and if there be an eternal ſtate, he knows that he has made no proviſion for it, but is loſt and undone for ever. A proſpect which is enough to embitter every pleaſure; for with what horror and agonies muſt he reflect on the dreadful ſcene, whenever he will give himſelf time to conſider?

From the compariſon then it appears, that he who truſts in God has much the advantage as to preſent felicity; and as to futurity he ſtands alone in his hope and pretenſions. And ſuch an hope as is alſo the ſureſt foundation of his preſent happineſs; for from hence it is, that he derives content in his enjoyments, ſatisfaction in his expectations, ſupport and courage in calamity. His views are to another world, and therefore regards this with the indifference of a gueſt, whoſe ſtay is uncertain; but ſtill enjoys that peace of conſcience and confidence towards God, which affords a perpetual ſpring of comfort to his ſoul. He triumphs over death, diſarms it of its ſting, and even longs to appear in the preſence of that God whom he has truſted, and thro' whoſe mercies in Chriſt, he hopes to receive a bleſſed immortality. We ſee then, that a confidence in God is the only ſure foundation of our preſent or future happineſs; and the obedience of our lives is the only ſure method to obtain that confidence. But to approve ourſelves to God, by righteouſneſs, holineſs and purity, and to perſevere in the duties he hath preſcribed, muſt be the groundwork of our happineſs. This will enable us to look up to God, with a firm truſt in his providence; a truſt that will ſupport us in all events of life; and

when we paſs thro' the vale of the ſhadow of death, the light of God's countenance will be our conſolation, and open a proſpect to our faith, into thoſe regions of bliſs and glory, where our labours, our fears and ſorrows, ſhall ceaſe, and be no more.

And from what has been obſerved we may infer, how vain it is to place our truſt in any thing but God; and yet this, all theſe perſons do, who depend on riches, honours, great parts, and natural abilities; expecting deliverance, by their means, from all the troubles and calamities of life. This, indeed, is too frequently the caſe of moſt men, when under trouble and affliction. For, when we lie upon a bed of ſickneſs, do not we chiefly depend upon the medicines preſcribed by the phyſician for our recovery? Do not our fees fly faſter than our prayers? Is not God's miniſter the laſt perſon called in to our aſſiſtance, if at all, and perhaps not till the perſon is reduced to the laſt extremity? The great work of providing for eternity, is thought to be the employment only of ſome languiſhing moments; and when all other helps fail, then we begin to fly to God for his aſſiſtance. It is no doubt our duty, in time of ſickneſs, to make uſe of thoſe means God has appointed: but then, we muſt alſo apply to God by prayer, confide and truſt in him, and he will bleſs and ſanctify the means we uſe, and render them effectual. The huſbandman, when he cultivates and tills the ground, uſes all his ſkill, labour and induſtry; he ſows his ſeed, in the ſweat of his brow, and takes the moſt proper, convenient ſeaſons; and yet for a bleſſing on theſe his endeavours, he muſt truſt in and depend on that God, who gives the former and latter rain. And thus alſo it is, with the word of God, ſown upon the hearts of men; the preacher muſt diligently perform his duty, in diſ-

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pensing the word, the hearers must sit and dispose their hearts to receive it; but still the success will depend on God's blessing; if Apollos waters, it is God who gives the increase.

From hence we may also learn the weakness and folly of making use of unlawful means to accomplish any of our designs. They who act thus, so far from trusting in God, do enter themselves into the devil's service. For sin is the work of the devil; and we are his servants, if we do his work. If we make use of sinful means to attain our ends, when God allows only such as be lawful, we in effect declare, that we will not trust and confide in him, but in the devil. God has assured us in his word, that if we observe the means he has appointed, will fear and obey him; that he will protect us in all calamities, support us under temptations, and deliver us in all our straits and necessities, if we will trust and depend upon him. But if we will not hearken to his voice, and obey his laws, it will be just for God to leave us to ourselves, to withdraw that help and assistance of his, which we slight, and to suffer our enemies to destroy us. Again,

From hence we may learn, how it happens, that so many of our designs and undertakings prove unsuccessful; it is because we trust too much in our own wisdom and strength, and do not rely on God's assistance. And the reason why so many temptations prevail over us, is, because we think to subdue them by our own power; we also sink under the weight of affliction, because we depend upon ourselves, and will not trust in God. He will therefore blast our designs, defeat our best projects, and make the weak things of this world, to confound the mighty. So that if we would have our undertakings prosper, we must have recourse to such means as are just and lawful, and having placed our trust and confidence in God, to resign our-

ſelves to God's will, and leave the ſucceſs to his wiſe diſpoſal.

Laſtly, we may from hence obſerve, how happy that man is, who has led a holy life. Such an one may truſt in God, on all occaſions. No calamity can happen to him, againſt which he is not prepared; no affliction which he is not able to undergo; come life or death, all is alike to him. He can ſay with Job, "tho' he ſlay me, yet will "I truſt in him." In a time of public calamity, when dread and deſtruction approach near; or when the greateſt of all troubles ſeize him, a wounded ſpirit, or a miſgiving confidence; he can then rely on his bleſſed Saviour, and plead the merits and ſufferings of the crucified Jeſus. Even in his laſt hour, when death, the king of terrors, ſets all his forces in array; when his mind is filled with horror and diſmay, when the wicked ſhall call for the mountains to fall on them, thinking to eſcape the anger of an offended God; then will the ſoul of every good man be filled with comfort, and ſelf-complacency, and have the pleaſing ſatisfaction to know, that he has made his peace with God, and got an intereſt in the merits of his crucified Saviour; that the ſting of death is taken away, and a crown of glory prepared for him. As a good conſcience was a continual feaſt to him, in his life-time, ſo will it more abundantly be ſo, at the hour of his death. But a wicked ungodly perſon has no ſuch comfort to ſupport him in a day of affliction; ſo that his condition muſt be extremely miſerable, who has ſo much to fear, and nothing to hope for.

Let me then intreat and beſeech every one, ſeriouſly to conſider, that ſhortly a time will come, we know not how ſoon, when we muſt reſign up our breath to him that gave it; and then, of all the time we now laviſh away, none will bring us any ſatisfaction, but thoſe happy moments which

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we have ſpent in the duties of religion; in the buſineſs of our lawful callings, and in acts of charity to our neighbour; in informing the ignorant, reproving the ſinner, viſiting the ſick, and adminiſtring to all the ſpiritual and temporal wants of our indigent brother. Nothing will then bring us any comfort, but that we have led ſober, honeſt, and devout lives; that we have feared the Lord, and obeyed the voice of his word; and therefore have good reaſon to truſt in the Lord, and to ſtay ourſelves upon our God.

Diſcourſe LXXII. Bp. *Atterbury.*

Of SUBMISSION and RESIGNATION to the WILL of GOD.

Matt. xxvi. 39.

—Nevertheleſs, not as I will, but as thou wilt.

WHEN our bleſſed Saviour was going to offer himſelf a ſacrifice for the ſins of mankind, he retired with his diſciples, to prepare himſelf for the dreadful conflict; in which he was not only to "wreſtle with fleſh and blood, and the "powers of darkneſs," but to ſuffer the diſpleaſure of an incenſed God, juſtly provoked by ſinful men; not only to bear our infirmities, but the puniſhment of our ſins was to be inflicted on him, even that bitter death and paſſion, which he endured, to atone for the ſins of the whole world. The appearance of theſe ſufferings, made our bleſſed Lord "exceeding ſorrowful, even unto death: ſo that he "ſweat great drops of blood, falling to the "ground." This holy and innocent perſon, the beloved ſon of God, was grieved to lie under the diſpleaſure of his offended father, and human nature recoiled at the approach of ſo great miſery; wherefore he prayed, "O my father, if it be poſſi-"ble, let this cup paſs from me; nevertheleſs, not "as I will, but as thou wilt." Which words, were chiefly deſigned to expreſs the ſubmiſſion of our Saviour's

Saviour's will to God's; and the resignation of himself to the divine pleasure.—It shall be my present business, to consider the nature and extent of the duty, of submission to the will of God, as also to shew, that this is built on a rational foundation; and that the practice of it, will produce very happy effects.

Submission of our wills to God's, imports the performing those things which God commands; or patiently suffering the evils which God either permits, or inflicts on us. The one may be called an active, the other a passive submission to the will of God.

Had man continued in that state of innocence, in which God had first created him, there would have been only required of him, and active submission to the will of God; for by obeying the laws and commands of God, he would have attained to the perfection of his nature, and then both himself, and his posterity had been happy for ever. But by transgressing the divine law, he introduced sin, with all its fatal consequences into the world, and became subject to those innumerable afflictions and calamities, which have since been the lot and portion of his miserable posterity. However, as this is now the melancholy condition of mankind, it becomes us patiently to submit ourselves, and to behave with resignation and composure of mind, whenever any calamity or affliction befalls us.

This submission of ourselves to God's will, consists in the habit, and not in the act; and properly denotes such a temper and frame of mind, as is prepared chearfully to bear whatever can possibly happen to us. And every good Christian ought to bring himself to such a meek, humble, and resigned temper, as to be able to say, "O Lord, "tho' I should rather desire an easy and comfort-"able condition in this life; freedom from pain,

" ſickneſs, poverty, and all other evils and cala-
" mities; yet if thou art pleaſed to order it other-
" wiſe, I moſt humbly ſubmit myſelf, and all my
" concerns to the direction of thy good provi-
" dence. I will endeavour, by mortifying my
" unruly luſts and paſſions, by taking off my
" affections from tranſitory enjoyments, to ob-
" tain ſuch a diſpoſition of mind, as may diſ-
" poſe and incline me to be wholly reſigned to
" thy will, and to behave quietly and contented-
" ly under thy afflicting hand. And let not any
" thing be as I will, but as thou wilt." This is that ſubmiſſion to the will of God, recommended in the text, to our imitation. But then,

Our wills muſt be intirely ſubmitted to God's; we muſt reſign ourſelves to his diſpoſal, without the leaſt reſerve; we muſt not ſay with Naaman, in this one thing pardon thy ſervant: or, I could willingly ſuffer any croſs or misfortune, ſo the Lord would remove this affliction, which is greater than I can bear; but we muſt be prepared to ſubmit to whatever he is pleaſed to lay upon us; and patiently to endure it, tho' we are touched in the moſt tender part. For a partial obedience is very imperfect, and is only a ſubmiſſion to our wills, and not to God's. Again, we muſt practiſe this duty on all occaſions, during the whole courſe of our lives. We muſt repoſe ourſelves under God's protection, continue quiet and contented in adverſity, as well as proſperity, when God writes bitter things againſt us, as well as when we enjoy the light of his countenance. It is a duty but of low attainment, to ſubmit our wills to the divine, only when we enjoy all our hearts can wiſh; but can we take contentedly the ſpoiling of our goods, the loſs of our children, the ingratitude of our friends, a painful and accute diſtemper, and then ſay with Job, " the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken

" away,

" away, bleſſed be the name of the Lord?" And yet we ought chearfully to ſubmit to the will of God; to rejoice and be exceeding glad, when we ſuffer for righteouſneſs ſake; " for whom God " loveth, he chaſteneth, and correcteth every ſon " whom he receiveth." We muſt be careful not to fret, or be peviſh at every croſs accident; but whatever misfortune befalls us, let us in patience poſſeſs our ſouls, and endeavour to retain that happy chearfulneſs, and even compoſed temper of mind, which ſweetens the moſt bitter cup, and renders every adverſe condition in life tolerable. And,

The reaſonableneſs of performing this duty will plainly appear, if we conſider, that God is the great creator and governor of the world. He made us, and not we ourſelves, and therefore may juſtly diſpoſe of us, according to his own will and pleaſure; " ſhall the clay ſay to the potter, why haſt thou " made me thus?" may not God do what he will with his own? Beſides, God has not only an abſolute, unlimitted power over us, but he is alſo a Being of infinite wiſdom, to conduct and bring about the great deſigns of his providence. All things are ordered wiſely, and for the beſt: and tho' we murmur and repine at his diſpenſations, imagining that God deals hardly with us; yet upon the whole, he does what is fitteſt for us. Indeed, God doth not always conſult the preſent benefit of particular perſons, for good men are frequently involved in common calamities with other people. But could we look thro' the whole ſeries of God's diſpenſations, we ſhould find, that the affairs of this world are managed with exquiſite wiſdom and prudence, all things conducing to the moſt excellent ends. How reaſonable is it then, that ſuch blind ignorant wretches as we are, ſhould reſign ourſelves to the conduct of an infinite wiſe God? to obſerve his directions, execute his commands, govern our

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lives and converſations by his laws, and ſubmit all our concerns to his diſpoſal? For,

God is not only infinitely wiſe and powerful, but alſo a moſt good and merciful Being, and naturally inclined to help and aſſiſt the diſtreſſed and miſerable. He has bowels of compaſſion, and is tenderly affected towards us, ready to relieve all our neceſſities, to ſupply all our wants, and to aſſiſt us, if we will put our truſt in him; and he takes more delight in ſatisfying our neceſſities, than any earthly parent can ſhew towards his children. So that it is certainly highly reaſonable, that we ſhould rely and depend upon him. For if God is inclined to do us good, and to make us happy; if he is infinitely wiſe and powerful, both knows and can perform, what will moſt conduce to our trueſt intereſt and advantage, and be beſt for us; we may from hence rationally conclude, that he will order all affairs of this world ſo, as ſhall be moſt for the good of thoſe who fear and ſerve him: and tho' afflictions are not for the preſent, joyous, but grievous, yet, when God ſees it neceſſary for us to taſte of the bitter cup, he will ſo direct it, as that in the end it ſhall be for our real benefit and advantage. In truth, the conſideration of the power, the ſovereignty, the wiſdom, and mercy of God has ſuch a natural tendency to beget in us an entire reſignation to the divine will, that even heathens could ſay, "Lead me, O Lord, whither thou "pleaſeſt, and I will follow thee; and tho' I "ſhould be unwilling, yet I am reſolved to bend "my ſtubborn will, and force it into a compliance "with thy divine will." Words that ought to be in the mouths of all good Chriſtians. Indeed, as God's will muſt be done, whether we will or no, it is vain and weak to think we can reſiſt and oppoſe it.

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The doing God's will actively, is in our power. It is left to our choice, whether we will obey the commands of God, and ſubmit to thoſe laws which he has dictated to us by nature, or revealed in his holy word; but we muſt alſo paſſively ſubmit to the diſpenſations of divine providence. And as we cannot avoid thoſe ſufferings, which God is pleaſed to inflict upon us, it will be our intereſt to make ourſelves as eaſy under them, as poſſible. Since, by a due ſubmiſſion of our wills, to the divine will, we ſhall conform to the example of our Lord and maſter, Chriſt, whoſe faithful ſervants we profeſs to be. Our bleſſed Saviour lived on earth in a miſerable and deplorable condition; he was afflicted, deſpiſed, and deſtitute of all the neceſſaries of life. "The birds of the air have "neſts, and the foxes holes, but the ſon of man "had no ſettled place of abode; he was a man of "ſorrows, and acquainted with grief." And, if the beloved ſon of God, was thus perfected thro' ſufferings, why ſhould we, his adopted children, expect to eſcape them? Is it not then reaſonable, that we ſhould taſte of the ſame bitter cup our Lord did? be content with our lot and portion, and chearfully reſign ourſelves to the will of God? —I proceed to ſhew, that an humble ſubmiſſion of our wills to God's, will produce very happy and bleſſed effects.

A due ſubmiſſion to the divine will, will be an effectual means, to free us from all ſolicitous care and concern for the enjoyments of this world. We ſhould reſt ſatisfied with whatever God has allotted us, conſidering that the great Lord and governor of the world knows what ſtation and condition of life is beſt for us, and moſt to our advantage, and therefore we ought to ſubmit to his good will and pleaſure. But we are apt to be too inquiſitive about future events; we love to ſearch and pry into

the degrees of heaven, which God on purpoſe has concealed from us; whereas our chief care and buſineſs is to do our duty, and to ſerve God in our ſeveral ſtations, and then to leave the event of things to the determination of divine providence. We profeſs to believe, that God governs the world, that his providence orders and diſpoſes all events; for not a "ſparrow falls to the ground, nor an hair "of our heads drop off," but with his good pleaſure; and ſhould we endeavour to wreſt God's government out of his hands, and place ourſelves in the throne of the Almighty? Every true diſciple, ſhould rather ſay, "Lord, not as I will, "but as thou wilt; if thou ſeeſt fit to give me "riches or honours, and hopeful offſpring, or any "the enjoyments of this world, I will endeavour "to receive them gratefully, to uſe them mode-"rately, and to manage theſe talents thou haſt given "me to the beſt advantage; but if thou art pleaſed "to deny temporal bleſſings, or remove them "when I have them, I will endeavour to ſubmit to "thy good pleaſure. The Lord gave, and the "Lord hath taken away, bleſſed be the name of "the Lord." And from ſuch a reſigned temper of mind, will proceed a perfect tranquility, and calmneſs of ſoul. Moſt of thoſe boiſterous paſſions, ſenſual luſts and affections, which diſturb and diſcompoſe the peace and quiet of our minds, proceed from an inordinate love of the tranſitory good things of this life.

We ſet too high a value on temporal enjoyments, regard them as the principal ingredients of our happineſs, and uſe our utmoſt endeavours to obtain them; and if our unreaſonable expectations are diſappointed, we become troubled and diſcontented, and murmur againſt heaven; like Jonah, we are wonderfully delighted with our gourds, the comforts and pleaſures of life; but when they decay and leave us,

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we think God injures us, and then we murmur and repine againſt his providence, But the man who has brought his will to ſubmit to God's will, his happineſs is ſo firmly eſtabliſhed, as can never be moved, either by proſperity or adverſity; and he may ſay with the pſalmiſt, "my heart is fixed, "O Lord, my heart is fixed, I will therefore ſing "and rejoice." He is free from all thoſe unruly paſſions, ſuch as fear, envy, malice, revenge, covetouſneſs, which render the lives of other men uneaſy and troubleſome. For what has he to fear, who lives in a conſtant dependance on God's good providence, which rules and governs all things; and when he knows that nothing can hurt him, without God's permiſſion, and who will allot him what is beſt and fitteſt for him, and moſt conducing to his intereſt and welfare? For, why ſhould he envy the proſperity and happineſs of others, who knows that all theſe things are diſpoſed of, by a moſt wiſe God, who meaſures them out as he pleaſes, and proportions them to our real wants and neceſſities; as the wiſe allotments of the great governor of the univerſe? Why ſhould he harbour any rancour, malice, or revenge in his heart, who conſiders all the evils in this life, as the juſt puniſhments of his ſins; who when he is afflicted, does not ſo much reflect on or complain of the malice of him who was the inſtrument; but he looks up to heaven, ſeeking to appeaſe the anger of God, who does thus puniſh and chaſtiſe him. Every wiſe and good man regards the cauſe, from whence the good and evil of this life proceeds, and reſts aſſured, that none of theſe evils could happen, without the pleaſure and appointment of God, and he therefore receives them with ſubmiſſion and reſignation. Could we once bring our minds to this heavenly divine temper, of ſubmitting our wills to God's, this would take out the ſting of moſt of thoſe afflictions

flictions and calamities which befal us here; and our lives might be full of peace, tranquility, and happineſs. And then, the end would be obtained, for which our afflictions were ſent.

For one great end, why God corrects his children, is to humble their ſtubborn wills, and render them more conformable to his divine will; when once this is effected, God ſoon withdraws his heavy hand. For he doth not afflict willingly, nor take delight in chaſtiſing his creatures; this he calls his ſtrange work, which he never executes, but when men compel him to it. In truth, the chief part of thoſe calamities which afflict mankind, are the natural effects of their own obſtinate and perverſe wills, which he who can once maſter, will obtain a moſt valuable conqueſt. For the happineſs of our preſent lives, in a great meaſure, depends on the right government of our ſinful affections and inordinate paſſions.

And every one who brings his will to a due ſubmiſſion to God's will, have his converſation in heaven. His chief employment here, will be the ſerving and worſhipping of God; he will take pleaſure and delight in the exerciſes of religion and devotion, and thereby preſerve and maintain that ſweet communion, which is between God and every devout ſoul. For, the reaſon why men take ſo little delight in the duties of religion; why praying to God and praiſing him, hearing, reading and meditating on his word, becomes ſo unwelcome an employment to moſt men, is, becauſe there is an oppoſition and enmity between our wills and God's. Our wills are ſenſual and carnal, and therefore cannot be ſubject to the law or will of God. If our chief happineſs be in ſenſual delights, theſe ſpiritual employments muſt needs be burthenſome; "for where our treaſure is, there will our hearts be "alſo." From hence we may eaſily know what pro-

progreſs we have made in this duty, of bringing our wills into an entire reſignation to the divine will; by reflecting how conſtant we have been in the public and private exerciſes of devotion; what pleaſure and delight we take in praying to and praiſing God, whether we daily meditate on his word, and are conſtantly fed at his table, and can ſay that one day in his courts is better than a thouſand elſewhere. It ſhould be therefore our great buſineſs and employment, to bring ourſelves to this divine and heavenly temper, that in every ſtate and condition of life, we may be not only content, but able to ſay, "not as I will, O God, but as thou "wilt." I ſhall now make a few inferences, and then conclude.

If we enquire into the ſource and cauſe of human miſery, from what bitter ſpring proceeds ſo much complaint and diſquietude to the world, we ſhall be forced to aſcribe it all, to this one irregularity, the oppoſition of man's will to God's. Our creator deſigned us for happineſs, and would we patiently attend to his directions, it would infallibly lead us to it. But vain man will be wiſer and ſtronger than God; he will lay ſchemes and form projects of his own, and contend with the Almighty, for the execution of them. But alas! the counſel of the Lord that ſhall ſtand. When we have wearied ourſelves in a fruitleſs conteſt, after all our ſtruggling and reluctancy, we muſt ſubmit, and gain nothing by the diſpute, but to be forced in a way, where a willing compliance had led us with pleaſure. In a man reſigned to the will of God, we have the noble image of a ſoul raiſed above the ſtrife and hurry of the world: ſafe in his fortune, and eaſy under every event of providence. What the bounty of his creator beſtows on him today, he enjoys with an humble and chearful content, unmoleſted by fear or deſire; and he relies on

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the ſame wiſdom and goodneſs, to provide for him to morrow. He prays indeed for thoſe bleſſings he really wants, and uſes all rational methods to attain them; but ſtill leaves it to God to determine what is beſt for him, and feels no uneaſineſs if he is diſappointed. Even under the ſeveral calamities, he ſupports himſelf with reflecting, that they are ſent by a juſt and benevolent Being, who never willingly grieves his creatures, and will not afflict beyond meaſure. Amidſt all the various ſcenes of life, he preſerves an unſhaken tranquility, ſlides gently on the ſtream of providence, ſecure in the affection and power of his governor, and prepared with equal pleaſure, to ſubmit to his conduct, and obey his commands.—On the contrary, all our councils, where God is not conſulted, are vanity and vexation; we ſow the wind, and reap the whirlwind. The mind of ſuch is perpetually tormented with numberleſs anxious fears in all its purſuits, in every diſappoinment left to deſpair; unſatisfied with the preſent, and apprehenſive of the future, without any ſettled enjoyment in this world, or any comfortable proſpects in another.

This ſtate would be much more deſirable than it is, if the will of God was done on earth; if men were as juſt, as charitable, as good-natured, as ready to aſſiſt and forgive one another, as God has commanded. Whence come wars and fightings, and all the miſeries that torment and diſquiet mankind, but from their luſts and wickedneſs? it is the root of ſin, that produces theſe bitter fruits; and the only effectual remedy is, to leave our ſins, and obey the laws and will of God. To conclude,

Were we fully ſatisfied of the infinite wiſdom and goodneſs of God, in the diſpoſal of all events; were this perſuaſion deeply fixed in, and conſtantly preſent with us, that whatever God appoints, is for the

the beſt; we ſhould ſee reaſon enough not only for contentment, and a patient ſubmiſſion to his will; but alſo for rejoicing and giving thanks in all diſpenſations of his providence. Let us then at all times, and on all occaſions, with all patience, meekneſs, contentment, and reſignation of ſpirit, be paſſively, as well as actively, conformable to the divine will, and demean ourſelves as becomes good children, under the chaſtiſement of a wiſe and good father; let us with ſatisfaction of mind, not only endure, but approve of all God's diſpenſations, ſo will he juſtify and acquit us hereafter; and for our patient bearing of our preſent afflictions, he will reveal to us ſuch an excellent reward of glory, with which the ſufferings of this preſent life is not worthy to be compared. To which God of his infinite mercy conduct us all, thro' Jeſus Chriſt.

Diſcourſe LXXIII. Bp. *Clagget.*

Of FAITH, HOPE, and CHARITY.

1 Cor. xiii. 13.

And now abideth faith, hope and charity, theſe three, but the greateſt of theſe is charity.

FROM this excellent ſaying of the apoſtle, we may learn what ought to be the end of a Chriſtian, and what means our religion affords us to attain this end. And if we duly and attentively conſider the nature of the things he ſpeaks of, it will evidently appear, that the uſe of faith and hope to us in this world, (for in the next, they will be uſeleſs) regards the advancing us to a higher perfection of charity; here called the greateſt of the three. Whilſt we are in this imperfect ſtate and condition, faith, hope, and charity, are very needful, and of indiſpenſable uſe, to conduct us to future and immortal happineſs. And ſince theſe three are diſtinguiſhed by their own natures, we ought to have diſtinct notions of them. But we are upon all accounts to aſcribe the greateſt excellence to charity; that it is a more perfect virtue, and hath a more immediate efficacy upon our eternal happineſs, than the other two. This will better appear by explaining the diſtinctions, of faith, hope and charity; and by ſhewing the reaſons and grounds, why charity hath the pre-eminence of the three.

Faith,

Faith, hope, and charity, however they differ in ſome things, yet agree in this; that they are all certain diſpoſitions of the mind of man, or principles, that have a natural tendency towards one and the ſame pious life and virtuous practice; as will be clearly ſeen, if we diſtinctly conſider them. Faith, in general, is an aſſent to the truth of ſuch things upon the teſtimony of others, as are not evident of themſelves. The writers of the new teſtament, by faith, or believing, always meant an aſſent to a propoſition, that is true, or a perſuaſion grounded upon teſtimony. Faith may be diſtinguiſhed into ſeveral ſorts, but chiefly into human, or divine faith. The faith which the apoſtles in the new teſtament treat of, was divine faith, or believing on the teſtimony of God; "if we receive "the witneſs of men, the witneſs of God is greater." The faith of moſt chriſtians is chiefly oweing to education, or to the opinion they have of their teachers, or to ſome ſuch method, whereby error is imbibed, as well as truth; and yet whilſt they believe the doctrines of the goſpel, their perſuaſion is true faith: It not being neceſſary to the nature of that aſſent, which we call faith, for a man to be able to give all the beſt reaſons for his faith, that may be produced. But tho' faith may be diſtinguiſhed into ſeveral ſorts, yet the general notion of faith is, that it is the evidence of things not ſeen, or a perſuaſion of the truth of thoſe things upon teſtimony, which we cannot diſcover by any evidence of ſenſe; and thus the faith which the apoſtle here ſpeaks of, is a perſuaſion, that the doctrine and laws of the goſpel, are the laws of God; that thro' the atonement of Chriſt's death, ſincere obedience to thoſe laws is the condition of the forgiveneſs of ſins; that there is a future ſtate when men ſhall be rewarded or puniſhed,

ed, according to their works; and that all the motives to repentance and a new life, contained in the Chriſtian religion, are divine revelations. This is that faith, which now abideth, and is of indiſpenſible and neceſſary uſe, to work that reformation in our hearts and lives, which will qualify us for eternal happineſs. For all other principles, than thoſe of the Chriſtian faith, are inſufficient, to perſuade us to the practice of religion and virtue. Indeed,

That religion and virtue have a tendency to promote our happineſs in this world, is an argument inſiſted on by modern divines and old philoſophers; but it cannot be ſo effectual to procure this, as a Chriſtian's faith. For ſuch arguments will not perſuade a man to that holineſs, without which no man ſhall ſee the Lord. They may prevail with a wiſe man, to avoid thoſe vices which are inconſiſtent with his preſent advantage; but not to deter him from many ſins, that are oppoſite to his eternal happineſs. There are no doubt many whom the care of their temporal intereſts will reſtrain from ſome vices; but if they have no better principles, what ſhall hinder them from thoſe ſins, which they may ſo diſcreetly manage, as not to hurt their bodies nor eſtates? What ſhall give them courage to reſiſt thoſe temptations, that threaten their preſent welfare, if they yield not to them? What can make them dare to die, rather than break the laws of God? So that the conſideration of preſent advantages, will not carry a man thro' the whole of religion. But if we firmly believe the promiſes and doctrines of the goſpel; if we make that faith the principle of our lives, it will equally reſtrain us from all ſorts of ſin, whether conſiſtent or not, with our temporal intereſt. A true Chriſtian's faith will make us refrain from all manner of evil, and not to ſtain and defile our minds and conſciences with ſin: For tho' our ſins may be ſuch, as not to faſten infamy

ſamy on our names, or procure the hatred and envy of men, yet it will deprive us of the favour of God, and exclude us from an eternal inheritance in the kingdom of heaven; and this is ſufficient to make us fly from ſin, with the greateſt indignation and abhorrence. If therefore our faith abideth, and we are really perſuaded of thoſe inviſible future rewards and puniſhments, mentioned in the ſcripture, this will produce in us the practice of univerſal goodneſs. The power of ſuch a faith hath appeared in multitudes of believers, who have been raiſed from the loweſt and moſt degenerate ſtate, to become examples to others of virtue and piety. This is that faith or firm perſuaſion of the truth of Chriſt's religion, which turned the heathen world from their vices and idolatries; that exalted men of low degree to that high fortitude of enduring torments, not accepting deliverance from death. And the ſame faith ſtill abideth for us, as was at firſt delivered to the ſaints. The promiſes and threatnings contained in the bible, are ſtill the doctrine of God to us, who have as much reaſon to believe them, and be influenced by them, as any who have lived before us. Thus much as to the nature, notion and uſe of faith.

That hope which the apoſtle ſpeaks of, ſignifies in general the expectation of ſome good, whereof a perſon hath no abſolute aſſurance; but here it means ſuch an expectation of eternal happineſs, as in the goſpel is promiſed to Chriſtians, who will faithfully ſerve God and do their duty; and perſevere in the practice of an holy life, which is the condition of the promiſe. Salvation is the object of our hope, which is more or leſs ſtronger or weaker according to the degrees of piety and virtue, that we have attained. But while we are in this world, we cannot with any certainty have more than the hope of eternal happineſs. It is therefore neceſſary that hope ſhould abide with us, to animate our en-

deavours to pleaſe God, and obtain eternal life; and God will not be wanting by his grace to enable us to do this, if we will do our part; and the more diligent we are in the duties of religion, the greater will our hope be. But if it be a ſad thing to live without hope of heaven, how ſhould this engage us to a ſpeedy repentance? If it is pleaſing to have this hope encreaſed, and our fears leſſened, how diligent ſhould we be to attain the habits of goodneſs and all Chriſtian virtues? Is the aſſurance of eternal life the moſt valuable ſatisfaction we can have; how ſhould this oblige us to perſevere in the ways of piety, by which only it can be obtained? God hath ſo ordered the method of our ſalvation, that our hopes ſhould not exceed the proportion of our virtues; that we may be always excited to great diligence in a religious life: ſince the promiſes of the goſpel, afford no true comfort if we are careleſs and wicked, and do not perſiſt in the ways of Chriſtian virtue.

As to thoſe who pretend they cannot ſerve God comfortably, till they are aſſured of their ſalvation, this is a moſt unreaſonable notion. We find St. Paul, when he was near the end of his race, thus triumphing; "I have fought a good fight, I have "finiſhed my courſe, I have kept the faith, hence-"forth there is laid up for me a crown of righte-"ouſneſs." So that if aſſurance is to be had in this life, the Chriſtian can only arrive to a full attainment of it, by a long and patient virtue; by a tried love to God, a great firmneſs in good principles, and a conſtant practice of true religion. But in the mean time, if we reſolve to walk as becomes the goſpel, without entertaining hard thoughts of God, and believing that he will ſupply us with grace ſufficient for us; we ſhall never want ſo much comfort, as will be neceſſary to encourage us in well-doing. Having thus ſhewn, that hope is a comfortable expectation of

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eternal life, if we perform the conditions on which God hath promiſed it; I proceed to conſider that other principle of obedience, which being added to faith and hope, completes the right temper and conſtitution of a Chriſtian; and that is charity, the greateſt of the three; the beſt and firmeſt principle of all our obedience and virtue.

The occaſion of St. Paul's diſcourſe upon charity, was the diſorders that then prevailed in the church of Corinth; and the branch of charity he chiefly inſiſted upon, was love to the church. From thence he proceeds to ſpeak of charity, in its full latitude, as the principle of all kinds of good actions, and under that notion reckons it with faith and hope. Some turbulent perſons in Corinth, proud of their gifts, by endeavouring to gain followers, had made diviſions in the church, and put things in great diſorder. This made the apoſtle to diſcourſe of ſpiritual gifts, and the uſes to which they were ſerviceable in the church of God; and then he ſhews them a more excellent way, than making themſelves great, by boaſting of their gifts. "Tho' I ſpeak, ſays he, with "tongues of men and angels and have not charity, I "am become as a ſounding braſs or a tinkling cym-"bal; and tho' I have the gift of prophecy, and un-"derſtand all myſteries and all knowledge; and tho' "I have all faith, ſo that I could remove mountains, "and have not charity, I am nothing; and tho' I "beſtow all my goods to feed the poor; and tho' I "give my body to be burnt, and have not charity, "it profiteth me nothing." That is, tho' I could ſpeak of religion, and the doctrines of the goſpel, with all the eloquence of nature or art, ſo as to gain the attention of all who hear me; nay, tho' I could ſpeak with the oratory and power of an angel: yet if I did not uſe theſe advantages for the benefit of the church, the promoting of true piety, the ſtrengthening of Chriſtian love and concord; but

ſhould employ them to breed ſchiſms and contentions, all my eloquence would be an empty noiſe, no more pleaſing to God, than a ſounding braſs, or a tinkling cymbal: nay, if I could prophecy, and interpret all the ſcriptures, if I underſtood myſteries, could reſolve all difficult and doubtful queſtions; or if I ſhould give away all my goods, inflict the greateſt ſeverities and penances on my body, be content to undergo torment and death; yet if I ſhould uſe the oſtentation of this wiſdom and eloquence, theſe auſterities and mortifications only to cauſe diſcords, and divide the communion of Chriſtians, this would not render me in the leaſt better, or more acceptable to God, than if I was ignorant of all theſe things. And then he takes occaſion to diſcourſe of charity, in its utmoſt latitude, as the grand principle of all kind of virtues.

Charity at large, is no leſs than an unfeigned love to God and man; to God in the firſt place, as the moſt excellent being in the univerſe, infinite in goodneſs and all perfections: and then to thoſe creatures of God, that bear the image of his eternal reaſon upon their ſouls. This love to mankind alſo includes the love of ourſelves, as being part of that ſociety, which was created for the honour of God, and the attainment of one common happineſs. And this virtue of charity, conſiſts in a lively ſenſe of the goodneſs of thoſe things, whereby the honour of God, and the benefit of mankind are promoted: from whence ariſes an obligation to all Chriſtian virtues: ſuch as piety towards God, and obedience to his will, meekneſs and peaceableneſs towards men, ſobriety and temperance in all our appetites.—He then that is endued with an unfeigned love to God and man, and with a juſt ſenſe of the honour of God, and the welfare of men, will be induced to perform ſuch things; and have as great an averſion to all vice and ungodlineſs, as any creature has, to what is deſtructive of its nature.

ture. "For love is the fulfilling the law;" and where an univerſal charity is the principle, an univerſal goodneſs of manners will certainly follow, was there no other motive to aſſiſt it. And thus I have briefly repreſented the different notion of faith, hope, and charity. I proceed to ſhew for what reaſons, and upon what grounds, the greateſt of theſe is charity; and this will appear by the following particulars.

Charity is the end of faith and hope. St. Peter makes faith the firſt principle, and charity the higheſt perfection in the Chriſtian life. Did all men truly love God and one another, there would be leſs need of faith to oblige, or of hope to encourage them to obedience; but ſince we are degenerated from the love of God, and a juſt ſenſe of virtue and goodneſs, it is neceſſary that we ſhould be armed againſt temptations, ſecured againſt our ſenſual appetites, and reſtrained from evil practices, by the fear of puniſhment, and the hope of reward. But the end aimed at by theſe external motives, is to work in us an inward principal of virtue; freely diſpoſing us to the love of God and men, to the practice of all pious and honeſt actions. And however difficult at firſt it may be for a man who leaves a wicked courſe, to keep God's commandments, yet by diligence in avoiding evil and doing good, when once vicious habits are broken, and that the love of ſin and the world gives place to the love of God, and his holy laws, then will the penitent delight in ſuch a life; and perform thoſe good actions which before ſeemed to be againſt his affections and inclinations, with the utmoſt pleaſure and ſatisfaction. This is the glorious liberty of the children of God, to which the goſpel deſigns to bring us. This is that ſtate which all the motives of religion have in view, in order to make us univerſally good Chriſtians. As much therefore as the end is preferable

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to the means, ſo much greater is charity, than faith and hope.

But this will further appear, by conſidering that charity is more excellent than they; for faith and hope are only motives to virtue, but charity is the noble diſpoſition of the ſoul towards it. I am therefore much ſurprized, any ſhould contend, that the faith by which St. Paul ſays we are juſtified, doth not include obedience; it being evident, that where he oppoſes faith to works as to our juſtification, he always oppoſes it to the obſervance of the Jewiſh law, or to ſinleſs perfection: The former of which could juſtify no man before God; and the latter in our frail ſtate is impoſſible. And therefore we muſt be juſtified by faith, that is, by believing the goſpel of Chriſt, and living according to that belief. It is therefore apparent, that the faith by which we are juſtified, ſuppoſes charity and univerſal holineſs; for to be juſtified by God, is to be eſteemed righteous by him. Indeed, it would be very ſtrange, that faith ſhould have all the juſtifying virtue, and charity none, which yet is by far the more excellent diſpoſition of the two; unleſs we can be ſo abſurd as to ſuppoſe, that God will value and approve of that moſt, which is leſs excellent; and that leſs, which is more excellent in its own nature. So that the faith by which we are juſtified, comprehends all things neceſſary to the making a good Chriſtian, and conſequently charity, which is the moſt excellent of them all. If a man firmly believes all the promiſes and threatnings of the goſpel, but does not love God, and keep his commandments, what commendation or reward can belong to his faith; or how is it poſſible, for God to eſteem him a good man? From hence it is evident, that charity, as here conſidered, is in its own nature more excellent than faith, becauſe without it, faith hath little or no excellence at all. Again:

Charity

Charity is a more powerful principle of goodneſs than faith and hope, and more certainly produces good effects, and therefore is greater. God knows, there are too many who are called believers, and have a ſtrong confidence of eternal happineſs, and yet are little better for this in their lives. But we cannot ſuppoſe a man endued with charity, that is, with the love of God and man, to be careleſs of doing what good is in his power; becauſe this is a never-failing principle of all virtuous actions, which belongs to the ſeveral conditions of men. It is this that makes men true and ſincere worſhippers of God, juſt and honeſt, kind and merciful one towards another; liberal to the neceſſitous, patient under injuries, meek and gentle in their whole converſation. This makes us pity the miſerable, congratulate the happy, and baniſhes envy and malice, pride and cruelty out of the world. This makes men peaceable in their ſtation, quiet and obedient under government, and inoffenſive in all their behaviour, becauſe theſe things contribute to the good of mankind. Charity makes a good man to conſider, that his reaſon and underſtanding, his wit and judgment, his power and riches, his place and calling, his health and life, are not ſo many inſtruments only for his own advantage; but as ſo many obligations to do all the good, of which they render him capable. By charity it is, that men are good and uſeful to one another, that their trueſt intereſts are ſtrengthened, their comforts ſecured, human ſociety is preſerved and made happy. So that if factions and animoſities grow amongſt us, it is not ſo much for want of faith and hope, for there is abundance of that even to infallibility with ſome people, and to a certain aſſurance with others, as the not having this divine grace of charity, to diſpoſe men to thoſe actions, which tend to the univerſal benefit of all ſociety.

Charity

Charity is alſo greater than the other two, becauſe it renders us like unto God, which faith and hope cannot do. What is the creation of the world, but an effect of the divine charity? What is our reaſon and underſtanding; what are all the benefits he hath beſtowed upon us, and all the creatures he hath given us for our uſe, but the emanations of his love towards us? What was the giving the Son of his love to ſuffer death, but the expreſſions of an ineſtimable charity towards ſinners? What is his patience and long-ſuffering? What the grace of his Holy Spirit, with which he aids us? What is our capacity to partake of that eternal life he hath promiſed to reward us with? What are all theſe and innumerable other bleſſings that he confers on us, but the charities of God towards men? It was charity and goodneſs that made the world, that governs and directs the affairs of it, in order to an univerſal good, the glory of God, and the welfare of his creatures.

If therefore we would imitate God, we muſt conſider him as the great example of charity, "and be "merciful, as our heavenly father is merciful." We muſt be ready to do all the good we can in our generation. Our minds muſt be diſpoſed to, and our lives employed in, the practice of all thoſe Chriſtian virtues, that will beſt promote the honour of God, the benefit of mankind, and the improvement of our own ſouls, in what is moſt excellent. For he that is moſt inclined to do good, that truly deſires the glory of God, really loves his neighbour, and is kind to all men; he it is that moſt reſembles God, the univerſal benefactor, the great original of charity, and fountain of all goodneſs. But as faith and hope cannot be attributed to almighty God, ſo can they have no reſemblance to God. Laſtly,

Charity is an immutable perfection in us, that will laſt forever. Charity never faileth. It is this

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by which God will be kind to his ſervants, and they forever dutiful to him. Our faith is uſeful to us, while we do not ſee the things we believe; and our hope, while we do not enjoy thoſe rewards we expect; but theſe two will have no place in the other world. The love of God, and of mankind, now begun in us, by the chriſtian faith, inſtead of being done away, will in the next ſtate grow into perfection, and be forever the life of that happineſs which abideth for us in the kingdom of heaven. So that charity is as much greater than faith and hope, as the ſtate of the bleſſed hereafter is ſuperior to this imperfect life in the fleſh, which we live by the faith of the Son of God. And God grant, that our faith and hope may be lively and effectual principles in us, of obedience and charity; that when this life ſhall be no more, we may with joy behold that kingdom, which we now believe, poſſeſs that reward we now hope for, and perfect that charity which is here begun in us.

Diſcourſe LXXIV. Abp. *Wake.*

The GREAT BENEFIT of CONSIDERATION.

Deut. xxxii. 29.

O that they were wiſe, that they underſtood this, then they would conſider their latter end.

THESE words are part of that great ſong, which Moſes ſpake unto all the congregation of Iſrael, immediately before his death, and which by God's expreſs command, he left as his laſt and beſt legacy to them and their poſterity forever. In the verſes before, we have a ſad and terrible declaration of thoſe judgments that ſhould hereafter befal them for their impenitence; which was no doubt the occaſion and importance of that paſſionate wiſh, into which that prophet here breaks out, in conſideration of their danger and inſenſibility of it: "O that they were wiſe, that they underſtood "this, that they would conſider their latter end!" Whether by their latter end we are to underſtand that great and terrible deſtruction which befel themſelves and their country in the loſs of Jeruſalem; or, whether of God's rejecting them from his covenant, and from being any longer his own peculiar inheritance; whether one or both, yet it is certain, that a greater and more amazing inſtance of the divine vengeance on a particular nation, has hardly been known from the beginning of the world: and the cauſe

cauſe of all their evils was inconſideration, a fault much more inexcuſable in the Iſraelites, as they had received moſt clear and ſenſible proofs of the divine power and goodneſs. For they had ſeen the miracles by which God had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and conducted them near forty years thro' the wilderneſs. They had beheld his majeſty when in a very terrible manner he vouchſafed to give them his law from Mount Sinai. Nay, that nothing might be wanting to awaken a ſtupid and inſenſible people, they had known his judgments too, in the puniſhment of their ſins. They had ſeen the deſtruction which their fathers had ſuffered, and were expreſsly foretold, what evils they and their poſterity ſhould undergo for their impiety. And yet all this was not ſufficient to awaken their conſideration, to raiſe in them a ſenſe of, and care to prevent the danger that attended them. And would to God theſe Jews were the only perſons to be charged with this neglect; and that our indifferency in doing our duty, did not equally proceed from the ſame inconſideration. Alas! were we to enter on a review, we ſhould find but too juſt a parallel, both in danger and incogitancy. And the words of Moſes may aptly be applied to us Chriſtians, "O that we were wiſe, that we underſtood this, "that we would conſider our latter end." In ſpeaking on a ſubject ſo neceſſary and important, I ſhall ſhew the danger and miſchief of inconſideration; enquire into the cauſes thereof; offer ſome general rules for the practice of it; and laſtly, draw ſome practical inferences from the whole.

It has been the uſual method of moſt caſuiſts, in enquiring into the cauſes of ſin, to expoſe the miſchiefs, and aggravate the danger, of thoſe particular temptations, that are the immediate occaſions thereof. Hence many run into invectives againſt the intereſts and pleaſures, the honours and riches

riches of the world; aſſuring the good Chriſtian, that he muſt reſolve to abandon them, or at leaſt quit all undue eſteem, and inordinate deſire of them. But the true and univerſal cauſe of all our evils, is inconſideration; this is neglected, or but lightly and ſeldom touched on. There are I believe but very few who place it in the number of their temptations, or think themſelves concerned to provide againſt it. But before I proceed to thoſe particulars which concern the removal of this evil, I ſhall endaovour to convince men of the neceſſity of conſideration; by ſhewing, that of all the devil's artifices, this has been the moſt ſucceſsful, and that all other temptations is derived from the influence of this. That riches and honour, pleaſure and intereſt, do only ſeduce ſome; triumph over the weakneſs only of ſome diſpoſitions; but that inconſideration is a general ſnare, which carries all before it: the one univerſal cauſe of all our ſins, being no other than this, that we do not conſider as we ought, what our duty is, and what our obligations are to practiſe it. And

It cannot be denied, but that inconſideration expoſes us to every temptation, which the devil ſhall think fit to lay in our way; it is often the cauſe that we are tempted, and always the reaſon of our being overcome by the temptation. How many ſins do men fall into, for want of conſidering and knowing they were ſins? There is ſcarce a more general plea in the mouth of every ſinner, than, that he meant no harm in what he did, that he did not know, or think it was unlawful. And this want of conſideration, expoſes men to infinite temptations, by keeping them in a criminal ignorance, of what they ſhould have known and conſidered. Nor are the ignorant only concerned in this danger. He who knows his duty the beſt, is yet often times no leſs ſurptized by his incogitancy, than

th n the moſt ignorant. The devil, who knows our weakeſt times, and conſtantly watches his advantage, then aſſaults us moſt, when he ſees us leaſt o our guard, and in no condi ion to reſiſt him. And if by a diligent care and attention to our duty, we are not as readily prepared to reſiſt thoſe tem tatio.s he ſollicits us to, as we are otherwiſe well inſtructed in our duty; our enemy will have a great advantage ag inſt us, if not ſufficient power to ove.c.me us. And that inconſideration is the real ultimate cauſe of all our ſins, will appear, if it be obſerved,

That there are in our religion ſuch motives and engagements to obedience, that were they duly weighed, it would be impoſſible for a man to live wickedly. Is there any among us who hath but once ſeriouſly reflected on the nature of God; how excellent his goodneſs is, how terrible his juſtice; With what an irreconcileable hatred he proſecutes ſin and ſinners for its ſake; That he is omnipotent, and cannot be reſiſted; omniſcient and cannot be deceived; that he is every where preſent, ſees our moſt retired actions, and will one day bring them all to light, in the "day when he ſhall judge "the world in righteouſneſs?" Let him, who has ſeriouſly conſidered this, ſay, whether the devil could draw him into ſin, while he had ſuch thoughts to oppoſe his temptations. But Chriſtianity carries us yet further. It ſhews us a God incarnate, a God made man on purpoſe for our ſalvation; who "gave himſelf for us, that he might redeem us "from all inquity." It repreſents to us a covenant of grace, ſealed with his own moſt precious blood, in which we have been ſolemnly initiated and ſworn at our baptiſm; the condition whereof was, "that we ſhould forſake the devil and all his "works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked "world, and all the ſinful luſts of the fleſh;" and

inſtead of ſerving theſe, ſhould obediently " keep " God's holy will and commandments, and walk " in the ſame all the days of our life." And whoever duly conſiders the weight and moment of this one engagement, will find it an impregnable fortreſs againſt ſin, ſuch as all the temptations in the world can never overcome. For to reflect but briefly thereon: What is there in all our ſins, or the temptations that lead to them, whoſe force and power would not be fruſtrated by this one ſerious conſideration? Where is the luſt that can offer any tolerable inducement to comply with it, when compared with our obligations to love and obey ſo great, ſo excellent a redeemer? Is there a paſſion ſo darling, an intereſt ſo valuable, that the moſt deſperate ſinner, in his cool, conſiderate thoughts, would be willing to exchange for heaven? or rather, which is the caſe, be content for the proſecution of it, to go down perhaps the next moment into hell, and there dwell with everlaſting burnings? So that however ſin may deceive us by our careleſſneſs, yet it can never ſtand before conſideration. It may ſurprize our paſſions, but cannot poſſibly reconcile itſelf to our reaſon. Nor are our natures yet ſo degenerate, but that a due reflection on our engagements to obedience, would, by God's grace, ſoon oblige us to a performance of it. And the hopes of heaven, the terrors of hell, the vanity of this world, and the eternity of the next, were they once conſidered as they ought to be, would ſo effectually ſtop our ears, againſt the arts of the " charmer, charm he never ſo " wiſely," as not to be able to open them to his inſinuation. Again,

That the want of conſideration, is really the great and true cauſe of all our ſins; let me appeal to the common practice and experience of all mankind, whether any who begins ſeriouſly to conſider theſe things, does not preſently become a good Chriſtian.

Or

Or elſe what is it that makes the worſt of ſinners, if they come into any danger or calamity, ſickneſs or affliction, or that any thing ſtops them in their wild carreer, ſo as to give them time to cool and conſider their duty, and their great and dangerous deviations from it? What is it but conſideration, that makes ſuch perſons preſently diſclaim their extravagancies, to confeſs that they were miſtaken in their notions of virtue and vice, and had therefore preferred the intereſts of the one, becauſe they had not known or ſufficiently conſidered the excellency of the other? And tho' theſe pious reflections may not ſecure their future obedience, but ſuch perſons may again return to their renounced follies, yet that is not becauſe piety and religion have not ſufficient reaſon on their ſide, and which ought to engage them to deny themſelves, and forſake their ſenſual pleaſures, and worldly intereſts; but only that their danger being removed, they have with it alſo loſt their conſideration; and their incogitancy again expoſes them to thoſe ſins, which when they reflect on, they will be equally ready to condemn in themſelves as before. Thus ſufficiently evident is the great miſchief of inconſideration. But I will add one reflection more, which is,

That whatever particular temptations we may by chance be expoſed to, would be of no force, was it not for inconſideration. Pleaſure, riches, honour, and intereſt, or any more powerful vanity, are not ſuch omnipotent temptations, as our corrupt affections would repreſent them; on the contrary, it is certain they would have no force, but by our own incogitancy. As for pleaſure; would the voluptuary purſue that as he does, did he really reflect, what, in a little time, will be the end of his debaucheries: That in a few years, perhaps it may be only months or days, all his enjoyments ſhall ceaſe; his pleaſures be exchanged for pain and

ſickneſs, impotence and infirmity; thoſe torments in this life, which are uſually the ſad fore-runners of his eternal puniſhment in the other? And as for riches; would any take ſo much care and labour to get them, who knows how periſhing they are in their own nature, and alſo conſiders that treaſure in heaven, which the goſpel ſpeaks of as ſo infinitely ſurpaſſing all the higheſt acquiſitions here; and ſo much ſurer to be obtained, ſo eaſily acquired, ſo durable and eternal? As to honour, if there can be ſuch a thing without virtue; if high places, and great titles, that have ſo long uſurped the name, may be allowed the character of it; what judgment can any conſidering man paſs upon ſuch honour; but that Chriſtianity apart, it muſt certainly be a vain thing to build a man's hopes, and expend his life, on what depends on mens opinion of, and value for us; who often give this thing called honour to the moſt undeſerving, in excluſion of the truly brave and worthy. And then for the intereſts of this world; alas! what can they appear to any ſerious conſidering man, but meer vanity, who does but remember the great and wiſe queſtion of his Saviour, "What is a man profited, if he ſhould "gain the whole world and loſe his own ſoul? or "what ſhall a man give in exchange for his ſoul?" Hence it is evident, that our greateſt danger under any temptation, ariſes from the want of conſideration.

And if we enquire into the cauſes of this inconſideration; it will appear, that the firſt and moſt fatal of all is, that men imagine they do well conſider theſe things, when in truth they do not. If we are ſometimes a little ſerious and reflect on religion; if we go to church on Sundays, and are not ſcandalouſly wicked the week after; if we receive the holy ſacrament in its ſeaſons, and reflect a little the week before on our ſins and vanities, and

reſolve

reſolve to ſin no more, this by many is called conſidering; and I fear is the only religion of a great number of people. But alas! this is far from being true conſideration. It is not every light reflection on religion, which deſerves that name. He that will do it effectually, muſt reſolve to ſearch the bottom of his ſoul; not a ſin ſo ſecret, a luſt or intereſt ſo dear or profitable to us, but to the beſt of our power muſt be diſcovered and rooted out. The danger of ſin in general, all the black circumſtances, and aggravations of our particular ſins, muſt ſeriouſly be conſidered; the hopes and terrors of eternity thoroughly weighed; what the goodneſs of God is, if we repent; what his judgments will be, if we continue to deſpiſe the riches of his mercy, and treaſure up to ourſelves wrath againſt the day of wrath. In ſhort, whatever can tend to convince us of our ſins, and certain danger, engage us to forſake the one, and eſcape the other, muſt be laid before us ſo long, till that by God's grace we be brought to ſuch a ſenſe of our condition, as ſincerely to repent of our paſt ſins, and ſtedfaſtly reſolve to obey God's commands: Without thus conſidering, no one conſiders as he ought; he only flatters himſelf, and cheats his own ſoul.

Another cauſe of mens inconſideration, in matters of religion, is the applying their minds and thoughts to other purpoſes. The generality of mankind regard religion, as a thing indifferent, and not as their proper buſineſs; ſomewhat to entertain them when melancholy, or at ſome ſolemn times, but not to be made the ſubject of their more immediate thoughts and conſideration. Thus do ſuch reverſe the maxim of our Saviour, and make, not our ſalvation, but the buſineſs of this world, our employments and intereſt, and too many even ſin and vice, the one thing needful. And if then this

is the caſe, no wonder if we ſee ſuch ſad and dreadful effects; for if men eſteem the concerns of this preſent life their main buſineſs, we need not be ſurprized they conſider no more of a far better country. We may indeed with Moſes, wiſh, "O that "they were wiſe, that they would conſider this!" But till this miſtake is rectified, we cannot much expect, they ſhould conſider their latter end: and tho' there is nothing more pleaſing or agreeable to our rational nature, than the practice of religion; yet there being ſomething rough and uneaſy in the firſt ſetting out, which the habitual ſinner cannot without pains and difficulty get over, this is another, and no ſmall diſadvantage to religion. He who proſpers by ſin, who grows rich, great, or honourable by injury or oppreſſion, by fraud and flattery, will no doubt be very uneaſy to embrace a religion, that requires juſtice and integrity, in every action; that forbids violence and rapine, all wicked artifice and diſſimulation, and all thoſe evil methods by which he has encreaſed and flouriſhed. So that what with a prevailing intereſt, or real fear; an unwillingneſs to forſake ſin, or thinking it impoſſible to be overcome; many I believe go on without conſidering, and hate to reflect on what they reſolve never to reform. Or, laſtly,

Men are apt to delay this great affair, reſolving one time or other to conſider, without having the heart to ſet about it. This is alſo a great, and I fear general, fault, ſuch as perhaps has ruined more ſouls, than any one thing in the world. Thus ſome refer theſe kind of thoughts to old age, and yet never come to it, but go down in the grave, without having provided for it. Others fix a time, which buſineſs afterwards diſappoints. At length, God's grace is withdrawn, and conſcience having been often denied, grows weary of any longer importunity; and when we thought to have conſidered,

ſidered, we find neither will, ſtrength, nor opportunity for it.

But it may be of uſe to give ſome general rules for the practice of conſideration. And this muſt be done by a ſerious and impartial enquiry, both into ourſelves, and our religion: by a diligent and ſtrict examination, what our duty towards God is, and how we ought to perform it. As to our duty towards God, the neceſſity of this, is ſo well underſtood, that however negligent all are, every one is convinced of his obligations to it. Indeed it is the fault of many, to fix their thoughts on ſome part of their religion, to the neglect of the reſt; to run away with the promiſes of the goſpel, without conſidering what they muſt do, to entitle themſelves thereto. Others, ſolely regard the difficulty of its commands, and concluding it impoſſible to live as they ought, think it in vain to try what they can do. Some admiring St. Paul's account of faith, without conſidering what it is, content themſelves with having a right faith, not regarding the neceſſity of good works, recommended by St. James. Others think themſelves ſecure, in being members of a pure reformed church, on the one hand; or elſe of an unerring, infallible catholic church, on the other; as if the eſpouſing ſuch an intereſt, church, or party, was all God requires in order to ſalvation. Many are the miſtakes of this kind; to prevent which, let me give this plain rule for the direction of all: that whoſoever will conſider, as he ought, muſt do it univerſally, and leave no part of his religion unexamined. That whatever conſideration contributes to leſſen our duty, or rather, does not promote it, is falſe and imperfect; and if he ſtops there, it will deceive and ruin him. We are alſo to conſider our ſtate and our duty, what God requires of us, and how we have lived, and not to defer this. For ſince our life is but a puff of

breath, every day in our noſtrils, and not one moment that we can call our own, it will concern us much, not to defer conſidering how we are provided for another world.

Repentance is a duty that cannot be diſcharged in a moment, nor is there any time, or place for it, after this life: and ſhould we thro' inconſideration neglect it, we ſhall in vain lament our ſin and folly to all eternity. Whoever has omitted ſo great and neceſſary a duty, let not ſuch longer defer it, nor ſuffer "his eyes to ſleep, nor his eye-lids to "ſlumber," until he ſets about it. Indeed it is to be wiſhed, that men would not let one day ſlip without this conſideration; becauſe a day ſeldom paſſes, but that we are guilty of ſomething that calls for repentance; and no one knows when he lies down to ſleep, whether he ſhall ever riſe again to perform it.

To conclude: I have already obſerved, that want of conſideration, is the great univerſal cauſe of all our ſins; and till that is removed, it will be impoſſible for us to repent of them. And one would think nothing more need be ſaid, to engage any ſober man to the practice of it:—but I muſt go farther yet. Almighty God, who has given us our underſtandings and wills, on purpoſe for his ſervice, requires the concurrence of them in all our actions; his ſervice muſt be reaſonable, or it will not be accepted. He is not pleaſed with what we do by chance; where his glory is not deſigned, he thinks it not advanced; and that good which is done without conſidering, is but a meer natural action, and deſerves as little praiſe, as a plant for growing, or a ſtone for falling down to its centre. It is in vain therefore to pretend to be Chriſtians, and to deſire ſalvation, without reflecting, what it is to be the one, and how we ſhould live to attain the other. This is certainly ſuch a combination of folly

folly and impiety, that was not ſin as great an e-my to reaſon, as religion, no man could poſſibly be guilty of it. For after all the frightful ideas men are apt to entertain of conſideration, it is not only one of the moſt uſeful, but the moſt pleaſing things in the world.

Let me appeal to the experience of thoſe pious ſouls, who by a due performance of this exercise have their converſation already in heaven; who are elevated above the little paſſions and intereſts, that engage the buſy part of mankind in ſo much labour and vanity: who live in this world, as if they were not of it; free and quiet in the midſt of its diſturbances; ſtill the ſame in every ſtate; who love nothing but God and their duty; fear nothing but to ſin againſt him; nor deſire any thing but to be diſſolved, and to be with him: whoſe well grounded hopes ſecure them of their future reward, and a good conſcience fully aſſures them, that neither death nor hell itſelf, nor any evils of this life, nor any terrors of the other, are able to diſturb the inward peace and ſatisfaction of their minds.

O happy ſtate! the bleſſed effects of a ſerious and frequent conſideration! can any ſinner pretend to have found in the ways of wickedneſs, a pleaſure like what a good Chriſtian meets with, even in the preſent courſe of his life? let the miſer boaſt of his riches, the ambitious man of his honours; let the voluptuary wallow in all ſenſual and unmanly ſatisfactions; but what vanities are all theſe, when compared with the ſolid comfort and ſatisfaction of a good conſcience? a conſcience, that can reflect freely on its actions; can enter into the moſt ſecret parts of its life, with joy and aſſurance; and delights to compare its duty and practice, to ſee how the one illuſtrates and ſets off the other. Who would not purſue the happineſs of ſuch a ſtate, tho' there were no ſuch thing as heaven and eternity

nity to follow after? Certainly, if pleaſure be that which is to govern our purſuits, it is the good Chriſtian that is the only wiſe man; and to conſider, the moſt delightful practice. Only let us ſeriouſly conſider, and as we ought; let us once in our lives be perſuaded heartily to experiment a duty, which is the great buſineſs of our whole life; let us be willing to be convinced, and to do our religion and ſouls ſo much juſtice, as to give theſe things a fair and equal hearing; ſo ſhall all thoſe bleſſings I have been ſpeaking of, deſcend upon us. We ſhall only exchange, not loſe or leſſen our enjoyments. Whatever pleaſure or ſatisfaction we have heretofore met with in the ways of ſin, we ſhall find them all infinitely exceeded in the practice of religion; and when we become fit for heaven, and ripe for immortality, we ſhall be tranſlated from theſe excellent, but imperfect joys, to thoſe abſolute and eternal bleſſings, which "neither eye hath "ſeen, nor ear heard, nor does it enter into the "heart of man to conceive."

Diſcourſe

Diſcourſe LXXV. Bp. *Clagget.*

The HEAVENLY CONVERSATION.

Philippians iii. 20.

For our converſation is in heaven, from whence alſo we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

THE converſation of Chriſtians, after the example of the apoſtles, ought to be in heaven; and we have great encouragement to ſuch a life, becauſe, if our converſation be in heaven, we may then expect that our Lord Jeſus Chriſt will come at the laſt day, to "change our vile body, that it may "be faſhioned like unto his glorious body." From theſe words, we may learn the character of true Chriſtians; that their converſation is in heaven: and ſuch a converſation is neceſſary, to our being raiſed to life immortal at the laſt day.

True Chriſtians, altho' they live upon earth, are fleſh and blood, have the ſame bodily deſires and wants with other men, and go thro' the affairs and employments of this world as others do; yet they are alſo citizens of heaven, and their converſation is there. A man may have his chief concerns where he is not in perſon. He may be in a country where he is a ſtranger, and yet a citizen where he is not in perſon; and in this caſe, he rather belongs to the place from which he is abſent, than to that, where he is preſent. And thus in the converſation of true Chriſtians in heaven. For heaven is their city or country, they being only ſtrangers and ſojourners

journers upon earth. Such are born again, as from heaven; and therefore may rightly claim heaven for their country; hence it is, that they are ſaid to be born of God, and of the ſpirit, becauſe they have received from God the principle of a new life, to live according to his will, and not after the luſts of the fleſh. "As many as received him, "(that is, Chriſt) to them gave he power to be- "come the ſons of God, even to them who be- "lieve in his name; which were born not of blood, "nor of the will of the fleſh, nor of the will of "man, but of God." Such were born into an heavenly life, by a doctrine from heaven, teaching them to live above this world; and by the Holy Spirit enabling them to perform what God requires. Baptiſm is the ſacrament of this new birth; and the baptized are born of water and ſpirit, and from that time they belong to an heavenly country, and are only ſtrangers and ſojourners here; for our heavenly birth is much more excellent than our natural birth, and gives a title to a far better place. Hence it is that Chriſtians ought to look upon heaven as their country, being ſpiritually born to a future inheritance there, if they live here, according to their new birth. For this reaſon, we muſt abſtain from fleſhly luſts, becauſe we are born to an inheritance in heaven, which we ſhall receive at the great day, if in this ſtate of pilgrimage, we avoid the luſts of the fleſh, which are dangerous impediments in our way to heaven. To thoſe who are "born again, he gave power to be- "come the ſons of God:" that is, they had a title, as all the children of God have, to the promiſe of a bleſſed reſurrection, and of eternal life. So that by being baptiſed, we are born to a title to heaven, tho' that place is not to be obtained till the great reſurrection; when Chriſt ſhall bring us there. But it will be proper to conſider, how and in what manner our converſation is in heaven. The

The converſation of true Chriſtians is in heaven, as they yield a chearful obedience to the laws, and live after the manner of that ſtate; their chief intereſt and dependance is there, and not in this world, and they obſerve the laws of man in ſubordination to the laws of God. True Chriſtians meaſure good and evil, what is to be done, or avoided, not by the will of man, or the concerns of this life, but by the commands of God, and the laws of his kingdom, where their chief intereſts lie. Well therefore might the apoſtles ſay, that their converſation was in heaven; for this appeared by the manner and deſign of their lives. The power and greatneſs of the world were againſt them, whilſt they were diſcharging the office committed to them by their Lord and maſter. And tho' forbidden by all earthly authority, to do what they were commanded, yet they ventured at the loſs of all things temporal, to obey and fulfil the pleaſure of God; which manifeſtly proves, that their great concern did not lie in this world, but in a far better. And thus are true Chriſtians citizens of heaven, becauſe no dangers deter them, no human pleaſures allure them, from their ſteady obedience to the laws of that place. They worſhip God with purity, they treat their neighbour with ſincerity, and love without diſſimulation. They do not uſe riches for covetouſneſs or luxury, or bear afflictions with impatience, nor return injuries for injuries, as the way of this world is; becauſe they live by an heavenly rule, that does not allow theſe things. The apoſtle ſays, be not conformed to this world, which would be unreaſonable, if all our hopes were to be fixed on it. For men to live here, and not take the ſame liberties that others do, would be exceedingly hard, were this world the chief of their concern; but if their behaviour be according to the rules of a better place, where they

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are going; this is a moſt juſt and reaſonable ſingularity.

The great and ſubſtantial duties of religion, which true Chriſtians practiſe on earth, are the ſame which angels, and juſt men made perfect, perform in heaven; for they live as do the inhabitants of heaven. The reverence and love which they bear to God, their diſeſteem of and diſengagement from ſenſual pleaſures, their ſearch after divine truths, and care to maintain a good conſcience; their mercy and charity to the miſerable and needy, their readineſs and diſpoſition to forgive, and to do good to all, and their taking delight and pleaſure therein; all theſe things render their temper and life, much to reſemble that of the bleſſed ſpirits in heaven, which is a ſtate of pure and perfect bliſs. Were all men endued with ſuch qualities, this world might be a kind of heaven, becauſe our converſation would be like the inhabitants of that happy place. And as true Chriſtians govern themſelves by the laws, and conform to the manner, and way of their heavenly country, ſo the deſign and end of their actions, and whole conduct in this world, is to be happy at laſt. A good Chriſtian ſo diſcreetly orders all his affairs, as always to be promoting his eternal ſalvation, as well as his temporal intereſts. This influences a Chriſtian, in the choice of company and recreations, in the choice of huſband and wife, maſter and ſervant; in the manner of educating and diſpoſing children, and in all the great circumſtances of life, as to what may prove beſt, and moſt fit for them to chuſe. Again,

Chriſtians have converſe with heaven in ſeveral great and weighty matters. They receive all the good things of this life, as from God, the giver of them; and daily acknowledge their benefactor, teſtifying their gratitude to and dependance upon him. They conſider the doctrine of ſalvation, contained

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in the holy ſcriptures, as originally ſent them from God, and receive the holy ſacrament as a divine inſtitution; and for theſe they return him praiſe and obedience. They ſend up frequent prayers to the throne of grace, for bleſſings of the greateſt conſequence; for pardon of their ſins, for ſtrength againſt temptations, for patience under afflictions, for faith, wiſdom and a good mind, and the aid of the Holy Spirit; and God returns the fruit of their prayers in all things neceſſary or expedient for them, which they improve to the glory of God, and their own ſalvation. It may truly therefore be ſaid, that the converſation of Chriſtians is in heaven; their thoughts being engaged upon it, as their greateſt concern. It is the joyful hope of this ſtate, that relieves them under the uncomfortable proſpect of ſuch things, as this world affords. Here they ſee almoſt every where ſcenes of ſin and folly, flattery and deceitfulneſs, hard uſage and oppreſſion, malice and ill-nature, fooliſh ambition and ſenſeleſs avarice, vanity and diſappointment, miſtruſt and jealouſy, afflictions and objects of compaſſion, vice and miſery. And what can give them eaſe under ſuch apprehenſions, ſo much, as the pleaſure of looking beyond the veil of this world, to that heavenly place, where there ſhall be no trouble, confuſion, or diſorder; no brutiſh ſenſuality, no deviliſh malice, no baſe hypocriſy; where God will be ſerved with perfect purity, and man loved with perfect charity; where power ſhall be without injuſtice, and wiſdom without cunning; where all things will be right, becauſe none will be there, but thoſe who are worthy to live with God for evermore. Such conſiderations as theſe entertain the minds of Chriſtians; and they do not think of their heavenly country as a thing only deſirable, above all that this world can afford, but alſo as an inheritance, which they ſhall one day certainly poſſeſs. And this is that joy, which is unſpeakable,

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and full of glory, which makes them deſire to depart and be with Chriſt, and to long for the appearing of our Lord Jeſus; which makes them ſtruggle with, and at laſt to vanquiſh, the very fears of death.

The greateſt concerns of Chriſtians are now in heaven, becauſe they live in conſtant expectation of going thither, to be for ever happy in love and glory. And as their affections, ſo will their thoughts be frequently engaged upon it, and be the object of their meditations; and it will be their ſupport and comfort in adverſity, when the world frowns, and goes againſt them. Well therefore may the piety of true Chriſtians be deſcribed, by ſuch exalted expreſſions as theſe; that their "life is hid "with Chriſt in God, that they are not of this "world, but dead to it, and alive to God;" that they are here but pilgrims and ſtrangers, and their "converſation is in heaven."

Let us then ponder theſe things well in our minds, and conſider whether our affections and converſations, our tempers and actions, do anſwer ſuch characters as theſe, and which our holy profeſſion requires. Do we eſteem ourſelves only as ſtrangers and ſojourners in this world, and live after the manner and rules of our heavenly country? doth this appear in our ſincerity, in our charity, in our patience, in our reverence of God, and dependance upon him? do we really think of heaven, as our country, expect it as our inheritance, and therefore deſpiſe the afflictions and pleaſures of this life? is there that devotion in our prayers and thankſgivings, anſwerable to all this? or, on the contrary, are we not taken up with the cares and pleaſures of this world; obſerving only ſo much of the form of godlineſs, and the practice of religion, as that we may eſcape the reproach, and other inconveniences of this life? Theſe things are

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to be conſidered by all of us; that thoſe who love the Lord Jeſus, and look for his appearance, may rejoice in their own ſincerity: and that thoſe who do it not, may be aſhamed of falling ſhort of their profeſſion, dread the day of judgment, and better prepare for it, than they have hitherto done; by "ſetting their affections on things above, and "ſeeking the kingdom of God, and his righteouſ-"neſs."

Perhaps ſome may think the words in the text, "our converſation is in heaven," were intended as a character only of the apoſtles, or ſome ſtrict perſons, who ſeparate themſelves from the reſt of the world. But it is plain, that they are a deſcription of what all the true and faithful diſciples of our Lord are, and ought to be. The apoſtle ſays to all, "brethren, be followers together of me, and "mark them which walk ſo, as ye have us for an "example; for our converſation is in heaven;" which includes all perſons, and not the apoſtles only; who were to be as an example to others. So that this is the duty and character of all faithful and ſincere Chriſtians. But we are not to think, that this heavenly mind can only be retained by retiring from the cares and buſineſs, the pleaſures and temptations of a mixed converſation, into monaſteries and religious houſes. Our Saviour and his apoſtles did not direct men to run out of the world, to eſcape the pollutions and corruptions that are in it, thro' luſt. And if we conſider the reaſon of the thing, is the honour of chriſtianity and the good of mankind better provided for, by hiding the true ſpirit of religion in cells and monaſteries, than by ſpreading it abroad in families and towns? we find none of this, either commanded, or practiſed by our Saviour and his apoſtles.

And, if from the deſcription of true Chriſtians, we are to learn the nature of Chriſt's religion, what ſtrangers are the generality of us, to the true ſpirit of his religion? How little is there of it, amongſt thoſe who call themſelves Chriſtians? how few have their converſation in heaven, in the manner before deſcribed? There are too many profeſſed Chriſtians, who know they have a worldly and ſenſual heart, a ſpirit and mind eſtranged from God and things above, who have no reliſh of the other life, no affection or concern for heaven. And yet, ſays the apoſtle, "brethren, be ye followers together of "me, and mark them which walk ſo, as you have "us for an example; for our converſation is in "heaven." And O that every one of us could ſay, "this is true of me; I am of the number of ſuch Chriſtians as the apoſtle here deſcribes. My way and courſe of life is agreeable to this; for tho' I live and converſe in the world, tranſact the buſineſs and manage the affairs of it; yet ſuch is my heart, temper, and behaviour in life and practice, that I eſteem myſelf a citizen above, my great concern being there." But I fear, there are very few whoſe conſciences can teſtify thus much of them; and who are arrived at this height of Chriſtianity, at this heavenly mind. But how many are there, "whoſe God is their belly, whoſe "glory is in their ſhame, who mind earthly "things?"

But let us ſeriouſly conſider the purport of theſe words, our converſation is in heaven; and reflect whether our practice and temper have been agreeable to the character of true Chriſtians. Let us remember, that all who are baptiſed, are in the new teſtament ſaid to be born of God, to be dead with Chriſt, to be riſen with him, and to have put on Chriſt. The reaſon of theſe expreſſions is, that Chriſtianity requires a ſpiritual, heavenly life,

life, and all who profeſs it are vaſtly obliged ſo to do; having ſufficient means to enable them to perform all that is required. And therefore let us be converſant in reading the holy ſcriptures, in particular the new teſtament, wherein we find our Saviour deſcribing the ſincerity, piety and virtue of his diſciples: and the writings of the apoſtles are ſo full of affectionate exhortations to practical godlineſs, that we may from thence ſee what the true ſpirit of our moſt holy religion is. And we ſhould ſo digeſt in our thoughts, and imprint on our minds, thoſe deſcriptions of Chriſtianity, as to conform our actions to them; and in particular to practiſe the duty here recommended, of having our converſation in heaven. And as a motive and encouragement to ſuch an heavenly converſation, we are aſſured of being raiſed to life immortal, when Chriſt ſhall "come to change "our vile body, and to faſhion it like to his glori-"ous body." But we can have no hope of this, unleſs we have our converſation in heaven; for a worldly converſation will not be ſufficient for this purpoſe.

And here it will be very proper, to ſhew the difference between the ſecular, and the Chriſtian life; that is, between that goodneſs of temper and converſation, which is required to a bleſſed immortality, and that which will ſerve for this world; whereby it will appear, that ſuch a meaſure of virtue and goodneſs, as is enough for our worldly welfare, will not be ſufficient for our obtaining the rewards and glories of the next life; that bleſſed hope of immortality, promiſed by Chriſt, when he ſhall come again to raiſe and change our vile body.——There are two ſorts of bad people in the world, that have not their converſation in heaven. Some, who give a looſe to all manner of extravagancy and debauchery, without any re-

ſtraint on their luſts; who work uncleanneſs with greedineſs, and take ſuch pernicious courſes, as expoſe them to many dangers and miſchiefs; waſting their eſtates, and impairing their health, which tends to ſhorten their days: of ſuch lewd perſons, it may be truly ſaid, "that their end is their deſtruc-"tion, their God is their belly, and their glory is "in their ſhame."

But there are another kind of bad men, who are content to obſerve the rules of virtue out of neceſſity, in order to ſerve their temporal intereſts and advantages; and ſo far as the practice of religion, ſobriety, and juſtice, will promote their worldly ends, they will put on an appearance of virtue and a civil converſation; but ſuch are religious, not from the principles of religion, but from the wiſdom of rhis world. It muſt be acknowledged, that there is a degree or kind of well-doing requiſite to render this life happy. Reaſon and experience aſſures us, that ſome meaſure of temperance and patience, liberality and fidelity, and ſuch other virtues, is neceſſary to the welfare and proſperity of a worldly man: for theſe virtues greatly contribute to a man's ſecurity and happineſs in this life; as they tend either to procure health, riches, friends or reputation amongſt men. For inſtance; he that regards his health, muſt not abandon himſelf to gluttony, drunkenneſs, or unbridled luſt. He that would preſerve his credit, muſt not ſpeak falſly, inſincerely, nor act unfaithfully. He who would live peacably and quietly, muſt not interrupt the peace and quiet of others. He who would receive benefits from others, muſt be willing and ready to do offices of kindneſs to them. He who would procure riches with reputation, muſt be diligent and induſtrious; and if he would preſerve them, muſt be diſcreetly frugal. All which plainly ſhew, that ſome reſtraint is to

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be laid upon our appetites and paſſions, if only to obtain the advantages of this life. It is therefore a weak objection againſt religion, and the fear of God, that they check natural deſires, and will not allow us many things, which nature inclines us to; becauſe it equally holds good againſt worldly wiſdom, which can never attain its ends, but by reſtraining us from many things we ſhould otherwiſe do.

For what is it that ruins men's fortunes and families, but unbounded luxury? or engages them in dangerous quarrels, but unreſtrained anger, or ſome other paſſion? whence come war and devaſtations by the ſword, but by the exorbitant luſts of men? there is no duty we can rightly diſcharge in any relation or ſtate of life, but we muſt check ſome inclination or other; for we muſt live by rule, if we would live happily. A maſter who would be ſerved, muſt uſe his ſervant well; a ſervant that would be well uſed, muſt ſerve his maſter diligently and faithfully. Parents and children, huſbands and wives, muſt obſerve rules, if they would be eaſy and happy with one another. What are human laws but reſtraints upon the natural inclinations of men? The fear of puniſhment, the love of life and fortune, often keep men from theft and murder, from ſedition and treaſon. So that if a man would maintain a tolerable reputation in this world; if he would preſerve his eſtate, live long in health, in peace and quietneſs, he muſt keep within bounds, check his luſts, and even that ſin, which doth ſo eaſily beſet him.

Let us ſuppoſe a man to be covetous, ambitious, malicious, revengeful or a knave, yet if he be wiſe, he will be often obliged not to gratify, but to withſtand theſe wicked diſpoſitions of his mind, in order to prevent the ill effects they would produce, if he did not reſtrain himſelf from acting them. But

his ſecular wiſdom will not preſcribe to him the whole duty required of a Chriſtian. The religion he may pretend to, is far from the converſation in heaven; becauſe he may be ſtill wicked in his heart and practice, and a great ſinner in the ſight of God. A cunning and obſerving man, may ſo diſcreetly order his vices, as to ſave his eſtate, his health and good name, tolerably harmleſs in a wicked way; but yet when he wants to carry his point he ſticks not at any wickedneſs, even the worſt of methods to effect his deſigns. But ſuch an one is ſo far from being a true Chriſtian, that all the goodneſs which appears in him, is grounded upon ſecular prudence and policy, which never carries a man further in religion, than to promote ſecular ends. The religion and virtue of a crafty, worldly-minded man, goes but a little way. For fleſhly wiſdom does not require of a man the performance of ſecret duties, of prayers and alms in private, which none ſees but God; nor the avoiding of ſecret ſins, ſuch as uncleanneſs and debauchery, thefts and frauds, when they may be ſafely committed; nor the forgiving of injuries, when he can properly take a revenge of his enemy. Theſe are ſo directly oppoſite and contrary to his main deſign, that they ſeem to him very ſtrange doctrines of religion, from which he deſires to be excuſed. And hence it appears that no man is truly religious, whoſe religion is not founded on the proſpect of another world, and the bleſſed hope of immortality.

For, by true Chriſtians having their converſation in heaven, it is ſuppoſed, that they are not overfond of this world; that we not only cleanſe ourſelves, from all unlawful luſts, but even reſtrain our inclinations, as to the lawful enjoyments of it; that we muſt not only be content with thoſe we poſſeſs, but be content without them; that we not only

only ſuppreſs covetous deſires of what we have not, but alſo an inordinate love to what we have; not only to forbear ſinful pleaſures, but to avoid the too cloſe purſuit of ſuch as are innocent and lawful. In ſhort, all our worldly enjoyments, muſt not only be lawful, but our value and eſteem of them muſt alſo be lawful, and ever ſubordinate to the love of God, and the reſolution of doing his will; that we may live for ever with him in his eternal kingdom. The religion of a worldly-minded man differs much from the religion of a Chriſtian, on account of the different manner of doing the ſame good. He that is wiſe only for this world, has no more in view than his own preſent benefit and ſecurity; but a Chriſtian is moved by faith in God, conſcious of his duty, and the hope of eternal life. Thus a man's abſtaining from drunkenneſs out of covetouſneſs, becauſe it is a chargeable vice, is not the virtue of temperance; ſo a man's faſting for ſtrife, is not the duty of abſtinence; his giving charity out of vain-glory, is not charity; his making long prayers to devour widows houſes, is not religious devotion. The character of a true Chriſtian, is, to do things that are juſt and honeſt, and to avoid the contrary, tho' it would better promote his worldly eaſe, intereſt and ſecurity.

There is therefore nothing of that ſincerity which Chriſtianity requires, where there is no other motive to doing well, than what proceeds from worldly views. But the Chriſtian is right in heart, and in practice; righteous in the ſight of God, as well as in the eyes of men. He not only ſpeaks the truth, but loves it; he is not only juſt, but abhors injuſtice; he not only reſtrains evil deſires, but ſubdues and mortifies them; and becomes a new man, becauſe he has a new heart, and a new nature. For the ſenſe of God's all-ſeeing eye, and

the hope of future happineſs, ſhews him the neceſſity of an holy diſpoſition, of a godly mind; and he obtains it by conſtant prayer. But he that arrives at this perfection, muſt be born of God; mere nature cannot reach it, nor mere doctrine infuſe it. The holy ſcriptures ſend us to God for it, and we muſt daily pray, that he will renew us in the ſpirit of our minds, and ſanctify us throughout in ſpirit, ſoul and body. So that the converſation of true Chriſtians, in oppoſition to that which is of this world, conſiſts in a perfect freedom from the vices of the mind, ſuch as envy, ambition, malice, covetouſneſs, and the like; as well as in avoiding the actions which evil affections lead to. It conſiſts in an univerſal obedience to God's laws, in having but a moderate love of this world, in governing our inclinations, even in ſuch enjoyments as are lawful, and in performing the duties and virtues of religion, with integrity of heart, and ſincerity towards God; which Chriſtian converſation, in the goſpel is called purity, ſanctification, the being "cleanſed from all filthineſs of "flesh and ſpirit; the new man, which after God "is created in righteouſneſs, and true holineſs; "and having our converſation in heaven."

Indeed the life of a Chriſtian, whoſe converſation is in heaven, implies ſuch a contempt of the world, ſuch a command over our inclinations, in things lawful, as is neceſſary to prepare us for immortality. We muſt not only ſubdue our luſts; but our affections to what is lawful muſt alſo be reſtrained. In heaven there is no worldly care, no trade or commerce. "Fleſh and blood cannot inherit "eternal life." The happineſs and delights of the promiſed immortality, are pure and perfect, and not mixed with ſuch mean pleaſures as this world affords. But the promiſe of immortal life belongs

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to none, but ſuch as are influenced in what they do, by obedience to God, and a conſcience of ſerving him; and not by the viler ends of this world. Sincerity of heart towards God, is that perfection, which the Chriſtian law requires as neceſſary to a bleſſed immortality, as well as innocent and virtuous affections. To inward ſincerity, the promiſe of future happineſs is limitted. He that hopes to ſee God, muſt purify himſelf, even as he is pure. He muſt be pure in heart and mind; for there "ſhall "in no wiſe enter into the heavenly city, any thing "that defileth."

The uſe then we ſhould make of this diſcourſe, is ſeriouſly to examine ourſelves, as to our expectations of heaven, and our fitneſs for it, by this; whether in that religion and goodneſs, to which we pretend, we are moved only by ends in this life; or are alſo governed by the faith of another? whether from what we do, we are men of this world, or "fellow-citizens of the houſehold of "God?" It is true, he that abſtains from drunkenneſs for his health, from luxury for his wealth, from revenge for his eaſe, and the like, avoid theſe vices, for wiſe and good ends. To be moved to our duty, by reaſons reſpecting this world, is fit and proper. The ſcripture perſuades men by ſuch motives, to the practice of virtue; as it tends to health and length of life; as it often brings wealth, and ſecures peace. "Length of days is in her "right hand, and in her left riches and honour; "her ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths "are peace. Godlineſs hath the promiſe of this life, "as well as that which is to come." And bleſſed be God, ſo much of the duty which he requires, as neceſſary for a future immortality, is alſo neceſſary for our happineſs in this world. But then, tho' godlineſs hath the promiſe of this life, yet we muſt not from thence conclude, that no

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more godlineſs or virtue is required of a man, than what tends to a worldly happineſs, or a ſenſual enjoyment of one's ſelf. Indeed, Chriſtianity is in general the beſt way to do well in this world, and a good man commonly thrives better in a way of piety and righteouſneſs, than others do by vice and wickedneſs; ſo that a wiſe man would certainly chuſe it. For religion prohibits all thoſe luſts which are enemies to our welfare here; and it alſo infuſes thoſe diſpoſitions and habits into our minds, as will make us happy as long as we live; tho' we may not have the proper happineſs of this world. But ſtill our temporal benefit is not to be the meaſure of the duty we owe to God, nor is our obedience to him ſaving and effectual, without the faith of immortality. Let this truth then be impreſſed on our minds, that the principal reaſon of that piety and virtue, on which true Chriſtianity ſtands, is the immortality it promiſes. God, without injuſtice, might have required that Chriſtian duty, which is more than the world demands, without annexing ſuch "exceeding great and pre-"cious promiſes, to the performance of it; but he requires this, becauſe it is abſolutely neceſſary to our ſupreme happineſs, which is the ſupernatural reward he hath promiſed to all ſincere Chriſtians.

Wherefore let us not content ourſelves, as being good enough to be meet partakers of the heavenly inheritance, till by diligence and prayer, we can truly obtain this character, that "our converſation "is in heaven;" till our piety and virtue exceed that of a prudent worldling; till we have purified our hearts, and overcome the world by the faith of future bleſſedneſs; till we are perfect in Chriſt Jeſus, and can rejoice in the teſtimony of our conſcience, "that in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity, not "with fleſhly wiſdom, we have our converſation in "the

" the world;" becauſe our converſation in this world, muſt be a converſation in heaven, if we expect our Lord Chriſt, at his ſecond coming, " ſhould change our vile body, that it may be " faſhioned like unto his glorious body, looking " for that bleſſed hope, and the glorious appear- " ing of the great God, and our Saviour Jeſus " Chriſt."

Diſcourſe LXXVI. Abp. *Tillotſon.*

Of the CARE of our SOULS, and the GREAT DANGER of loſing THEM.

Luke x. 42.

—But one thing is needful.

OUR bleſſed Saviour tells us, that there is one thing needful, one thing, which is firſt and principally to be regarded, as being of the greateſt moment and concern, for all to know and carefully mind; and that is the care of religion and of our ſouls; it evidently appears, this is the one thing neceſſary, and what every man is concerned, in the firſt place, and above all other things, to mind and regard. The deſign of this diſcourſe, is to ſhew wherein this care of religion and our ſouls does conſiſt; and to convince men of the neceſſity there is to take this care.

The due care of religion and our ſouls conſiſts, firſt, in the diſtinct knowledge and firm belief of thoſe things which are neceſſary for us to know and believe, in order to our eternal ſalvation. Without faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe God "for he that "cometh to God muſt believe that he is, and that "he is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him." Religion, or the worſhip and ſervice of God, ſuppoſes our firm belief and perſuaſion, that there is a God, and that he will reward thoſe that ſerve him; without which belief, there would be no ground or encourage-

encouragement for any religion. This knowledge of the neceſſary principles of religion, our bleſſed Saviour calls eternal "life; this is life eternal, to "know the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt whom "he has ſent." To be rightly inſtructed in the knowledge of "the only true God, and of his Son "Jeſus Chriſt our Lord," comprehends all the neceſſary principles both of natural and revealed religion. And to the attaining this knowledge, ſo abſolutely neceſſary to ſalvation, no ſuch extraordinary pains and ſtudy is required; but only a proper diſpoſition and application of mind. Since the knowledge of the true God, and the light of Chriſtianity, are ſpread abroad in the world, all that enjoy the goſpel may be ſufficiently inſtructed in all things neceſſary to our happineſs; unleſs ſuch care is uſed, as in the church of "Rome, to take "away the key of knowledge," and to lock up the ſcripture from the people, in an unknown tongue; and this, as they pretend, becauſe the generality of mankind are mad, and ſhould be kept in the dark. But ſuppoſing men to have the means of knowledge, which God affords, the great difficulty commonly lies not in our underſtandings, but in our wills; and when we know theſe things, we muſt attend to and conſider them; that the light which is in us may have a due influence upon our lives.

The due care of our ſouls alſo conſiſts in frequently examining our lives, and ſincerely repenting of all the errors and miſcarriages of them; as well all deliberate and wilful ſins, as ſins of ignorance, infirmity, and ſurprize. In the exerciſe of this duty, we are always to conſider, that the nature of true repentance, not only conſiſts, in an humble confeſſion of our ſins to God, and an hearty ſorrow and contrition for them; but chiefly

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in the ſtedfaſt purpoſe and reſolution of a better life, by actual reformation and amendment. Again,

The due care of our ſouls conſiſts in the conſtant and daily exerciſe of piety and devotion, both in private and public, eſpecially upon more ſolemn occaſions; by fervent prayer to God, hearing and reading his word with reverence and godly fear; by frequenting his public worſhip, and demeaning ourſelves in it with that ſolemnity and ſerioufneſs which becomes the preſence and ſervice of the great and glorious majeſty of God, who obſerves our behaviour, and ſees into our hearts; and by receiving the bleſſed ſacrament as often as we have opportunity, with due preparation and devotion of mind. For theſe are not only outward teſtimonies of our inward piety, but they are means appointed by God to improve and confirm us in holineſs and goodneſs; and whoever neglects theſe duties of religion, or performs them in a ſlight and ſuperficial manner, plainly ſhews, that he does not in good earneſt deſign the end, when he neglects the beſt and moſt proper means to attain it.

The due care of our ſouls alſo conſiſts in avoiding thoſe things which are pernicious to our ſalvation; ſuch in general is the practice of any known ſin. And though perhaps this may be remedied afterwards by repentance, yet no man that commits any wilful ſin, knows the diſmal conſequences of it, and where it may carry him at laſt; for upon ſuch action, God may leave the ſinner to himſelf, withdraw his grace, and give him up to a hard, impenitent heart. So dangerous a thing is it knowingly to offend God, and to commit any deliberate ſin. An inordinate love of the world, is alſo very pernicious to the ſouls of men; becauſe it fills our minds with earthly cares and deſigns; it tempts men to forſake God and religion, when their worldly intereſts come in competition with them; and betrays

trays them to fraud, falſhood, and all kind of injuſtice. And there are ſome ſo taken up in cenſuring error and hereſy in others, that they never think of ſubduing thoſe luſts, vices, and paſſions, which ſo viſibly reign in themſelves. Deluded people! who do not conſider, that the greateſt hereſy is a wicked life, it being directly and fundamentally oppoſite to the whole deſign of the Chriſtian faith and religion: For God will ſooner pardon innumerable defects of our underſtanding, than one fault of our will.—Another great miſchief which attends this temper is, that men are very apt to interpret their zeal againſt others, to be great piety in themſelves, and as what will bring them to heaven; they think that religion conſiſts in making much ſtir about the externals of religion, and that there needs no more to denominate them good Chriſtians, but to be of ſuch a party, and church, which they call the only true one; and then zealouſly hate, and uncharitably cenſure, all the reſt of mankind. How many are there that think they have made ſure of heaven, not by the old plain way, of leaving their ſins and reforming their lives, but by carrying their vices along with them into another church, and calling themſelves good catholicks, and others hereticks; as if a meer name would admit a man into heaven, or that any church had this privilege belonging to it, that a wicked man might be ſaved, becauſe he calls himſelf a member of it.

The due care of our ſouls likewiſe conſiſts in the even and conſtant practice of the ſeveral graces and virtues of a good life: "and in having a conſcience "void of offence, towards God and man." Religion is beſt ſeen, in an equal uniform practice of every part of our duty; not only in ſerving God devoutly, but demeaning ourſelves peaceably and juſtly, kindly and charitably, towards all men; not only in reſtraining

ſtraining ourſelves from the outward acts of ſin, but mortifying the inward inclination to it, in ſubduing our luſts, governing our paſſions, and bridling our tongues. The care of our ſouls conſiſts, in an univerſal regard to all parts of our duty. For tho' religion doth mainly conſiſt; in piety towards God; in temperance, chaſtity and charity; and in "truth "and juſtice, goodneſs and kindneſs towards all "men," yet no other grace and virtue of an inferior rank, ought to be neglected by us. Thus I have endeavoured briefly to ſhew in what inſtances the due care of religion and our ſouls doth chiefly conſiſt. And I would not have any man think, this is an eaſy buſineſs, and requires but little time to perform it; that a ſmall degree of diligence and induſtry will ſerve for this purpoſe; no, to maſter and root out inveterate habits of ſin, to bring our paſſions under the command and government of reaſon, and to attain a good degree of every Chriſtian grace and virtue; ſo that "faith, hope and "charity; humility, meekneſs and patience, may "all have their perfect work, and that we may "be perfect and intire, wanting nothing," that belongs to the perfection of a good man, and a good Chriſtian: This, whenever we come to make the trial, we ſhall find to be a work that will require time and diligence.

Some indeed would make religion to conſiſt only in believing what Chriſt hath done for us, and confidently relying upon it; but this is a fatal miſtake: For unleſs our faith works by charity, purifies our hearts, and reforms our lives; unleſs like Abraham's, it be perfected by works, it is but a dead faith, and will not avail to our juſtification and ſalvation. Our bleſſed Saviour hath no where ſaid, that faith, ſeparated from obedience and a good life, will ſave any man, but quite the contrary; for he promiſeth bleſſedneſs to none but thoſe, who live in

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the practice of such Christian graces and virtues as are particularly mentioned by him in his sermon on the mount; such as "humility, repentance, meek-"ness, righteousness, purity, peaceableness and pa-"tience," under persecution and sufferings for right-"eousness sake. Again, not every one, "that saith "unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the king-"dom of heaven, but he only that doth the will "of my father, which is in heaven." And he very severely checks the vain confidence and presumption of those, who rely upon him for salvation, without keeping his commandments; "Why "call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things "which I say? This is the love of God, that we "keep his commandments. If you love me, saith "our blessed Lord, keep my commandments." Thus vain and groundless is the imagination of those, who trust to be saved by an idle and ineffectual faith, without holiness and obedience of life.

I proceed in the second place, to prove the necessity of our minding religion and our souls. When we call any thing necessary, we mean it is so, in order to some end, which otherwise cannot be attained. We call those things the necessaries of life, without which men cannot subsist, and live in a tolerable condition. And that is necessary to our eternal happiness, without which it cannot be obtained.

The best method I can take to convince men of the necessity of religion, will be to shew, that it is the only certain way to happiness; and if we neglect it, we shall certainly be extremely and forever miserable.

That religion is a certain way to happiness, we have God's express declaration and promise; "he "that cannot lye hath promised eternal life, to them "who by patient continuance in well doing, seek "for glory, honour, and immortality." All the

happineſs that we can deſire, ſuitable to our nature, is promiſed us, upon the terms of religion; upon our "denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and "living ſoberly, righteouſly and godly in this pre-"ſent world." A mighty reward for a little ſervice! An eternity of happineſs, of joys unſpeakable and full of glory, for the diligence and induſtry of a few days. A happineſs large as our wiſhes, and as laſting as our ſouls. And it is certain alſo, that there is no other way to happineſs but this. He who alone can make us happy, hath promiſed it to us, upon theſe and no other terms. If we live after the fleſh we ſhall die, but if by the ſpirit we mortify the deeds of the fleſh, we ſhall live; without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord; and he who lives in the habitual practice of any vice, "of covetouſ-"neſs, or adultery, malice or revenge, ſhall not "enter into the kingdom of God." And if God had not ſaid in his word, yet the nature and reaſon of the thing plainly declares it; for religion is not only a condition of our happineſs, but a neceſſary qualification and diſpoſition for it. We muſt be like to God in the temper of our minds, before we can find any felicity in the enjoyment of him. Men muſt abandon their luſts, and thoſe ill-natured, wicked paſſions, of "malice, envy, and revenge before they can be fit company for their heavenly father, "who is love, and dwells in love."

But if we neglect religion, we ſhall certainly be extremely and forever miſerable. The "word of "truth hath ſaid it, that indignation and wrath, tri-"bulation and anguiſh, ſhall be upon every ſoul of "man that doeth evil;" nay, if God ſhould hold his hand, and inflict no poſitive torment upon ſinners, yet they would be their own executioners and tormentors. The guilt of a wicked life, and the ſtings of their own conſcience, muſt neceſſarily make them miſerable, whenever their thoughts are ſerious, as they will

will certainly be, in the other world, where they ſhall have neither pleaſure nor buſineſs to divert them. So that if we are concerned, either to be happy hereafter, or to avoid thoſe miſeries which are inexpreſſibly great and dreadful, it will be neceſſary for us to mind religion; without which we can neither attain that happineſs, or eſcape thoſe miſeries.

And did we ſeriouſly conſider the ineſtimable value of our ſouls, and the danger of loſing them, this would be a great incitement to a religious life. The ſoul is of ſo great eſtimation, that the world, was it poſſible to be acquired, would make no amends for the loſs of it. This our Saviour has determined. "What is a man profited, ſhould he "gain the whole world, and loſe his own ſoul? or "what ſhall a man give in exchange for his ſoul?" He deprives himſelf of a happineſs, infinitely greater than this world can afford, and that forever; and expoſes himſelf to a miſery ſo dreadful, as a prudent man, for all the pleaſures and enjoyments of this world, would not endure for an hour. The miſery of loſing a man's ſoul, is terrible and full of horror, the loſs great and irreparable beyond imagination. For he that loſeth his ſoul, loſeth himſelf; not his being, for that would be a happineſs; but it implies the loſs of God, and of all that is deſirable to a reaſonable creature. It not only ſignifies the deprivation of happineſs, but the infliction of the greateſt miſery and torment, without the leaſt ſparks of comfort, or glimmering of hope, without intermiſſion or pity, and this the wicked are to endure for ever. The loſs is not only vaſt, but irreparable; could we gain the world by the loſs of our ſouls, yet millions of worlds can never regain them. It is a loſs ſo great, that nothing can recompenſe it; ſo fatal, as never to be repaired. It muſt ſurely then be a ſtrange madneſs in any man, for the

tranſitory delights of this world, to forfeit the eternal pleaſures of God's preſence; and for momentary joys to live in pain for ever. Alas! the prodigious folly of ſinners, for ſuch mean and uncertain trifles, to hazard their immortal ſouls, and everlaſting happineſs; what ſevere reflections will men make on themſelves for ſuch their folly!

When the ſinner comes to reflect on himſelf, and ſeriouſly conſiders what he hath done, how will he cenſure and condemn his conduct? Like a man, who in a drunken fit ſells his eſtate for a trifle, when he comes to be ſober, is ready to deſtroy himſelf for ſo raſh an action. Or ſhould the ſinner baniſh theſe thoughts whilſt in health, yet when ſeized with ſickneſs, and on a death-bed, he will then be ſadly ſenſible of his paſt folly. When he ſhall ſtand on the confines of eternity, and wiſhfully look back on thoſe pleaſures he once delighted in here, and conſiders how much he is like to loſe, for the falſe and treacherous advantages of a vain world; he will then want none to convince him of his error, or to aggravate his folly. He would then gladly return all his unjuſt gain, obtained by fraud and violence, and even give the world, could he command it, to ſecure his ſoul. This no doubt is the ſenſe of moſt men when they come to die, and which if true then, is ſo now. Let us then whilſt life remains, ſuffer theſe conſiderations to take place and prevail, leſt otherwiſe they fill our hearts with anguiſh and deſpair in a dying hour. O the folly and ſtupidity of men! to be ſo tranſported with preſent and ſenſible things, as to have no regard to a future ſtate, no pity for their ſouls, no concern for their everlaſting abode in another world. To be ſo blinded with the pleaſures of ſin, which are but for a moment, as to forfeit the happineſs of all eternity; when the pleaſure is paſt and gone, and the vaſt price come to be paid, and our ſouls

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are leaving this world, and going to take poſſeſſion of that everlaſting inheritance of ſhame and ſorrow, of tribulation and anguiſh, which we purchaſed by our own folly, how ſhall we repent the bargain we have ſo raſhly made, but can never be releaſed from? Let us then attend to and ſuffer theſe conſiderations to ſink into our hearts, that no temptations may prevail on us, to do or neglect any thing, to the prejudice of our immortal ſouls. And when ever any preſent pleaſure or advantage tempts or ſolicits us to any ſin, let us conſider, what an unequal bargain we make, how ſmall the purchaſe, and how much we part with? "What is a man pro-" fited, if he ſhall gain the whole world, and loſe " his own ſoul?"

But how little do men live under the power of theſe convictions? for tho' we are allured by the moſt glorious promiſes and hopes, awed by the greateſt fears, moved by the moſt forcible arguments, the evident neceſſity of the thing; yet how faintly do "we run the race that is ſet before us?" How frequently and eaſily are we diverted in our Chriſtian courſe, by very little temptations? How cold, careleſs, and inconſtant are we in the exerciſes of piety? Did we act reaſonably, and as we do in things of much leſs moment, we could not be ſo indifferent, in a matter on which eternity depends. Let us then ſhake off ſloth, and reſolve to make that the greateſt buſineſs of time, which is our everlaſting concern. And when we are immerſed in the cares and buſineſs of this life, let this thought often come into our minds, that there is one thing needful, the care of our immortal ſouls, to be regarded by us above all others. To provide for eternity, to ſecure our everlaſting ſalvation, and to prevent the endleſs and inſupportable miſery of another world, is the one thing neceſſary that requires all our care and endeavours.

If we are Chriſtians, and do verily believe theſe things, and that after a few days death will come; ſurely this thought ſhould make us wiſe and ſerious. And therefore happy that man, who in his health hath made that careful preparation for death, and another life, as may give him ſo much conſtancy and firmneſs of ſpirit, as to be able to bear the thought and approaches of his great change, without terror and amazement of mind. Let us then make theſe our firſt and principal care, and put our ſouls in a fit poſture and preparation for the next world; that when ſickneſs and death come, we may not have much to do, but only to act our part decently and without confuſion.

Diſcourſe LXXVII. Dean *Stanhope.*

St. PETER'S FALL and REPENTANCE, an argument againſt PRESUMPTION and DESPAIR.

Mark xiv. 72.

And Peter called to mind the word that Jeſus ſaid unto him; before the cock crow twice, thou ſhalt deny me thrice; and when he thought thereon he wept.

THE examples of eminent ſaints recorded in ſcripture are of ſingular benefit to us, not only by thoſe ſhining graces and virtues, and that exalted piety and conſtant perſeverance, which ſhould provoke our zeal and encourage our imitation; but alſo by thoſe blemiſhes and failings, that proneneſs to ſin even in the beſt men, and the painfulneſs of that repentance, by which they were reſtored to God's favour. The thought of which ſhould abate our vain confidence, and awaken our care. Of this latter ſort we have an inſtance, in the bitter remorſe of St. Peter; whoſe fault and repentance were very great and exemplary. He denied Chriſt to avoid being thought one of his diſciples; he perſiſted therein with oaths and curſes. But when the crowing of the cock and his maſter's look had ſummoned the powers of reaſon and recollection in his mind, he immediately reflected on what he had done, went out and wept; nay, he wept bitterly. I ſhall from hence repreſent the circumſtances and aggravations of St. Peter's fall; and alſo the ſerioufneſs and ſincerity of his repentance.

And it was one great aggravation of this fault, in its being committed by St. Peter; a perſon who had enjoyed a long and familiar converſation with his lord and maſter; who had heard many excellent inſtructions delivered by him, both in public and private; who, beſides ſeeing the infinite miracles wrought in confirmation of the truth, had been admitted to be an eye-witneſs, of ſuch as more immediately gave teſtimony to his Lord's divine nature and authority. Such as the appearance of Moſes and Elias at our Lord's transfiguration; "when there came a voice ſaying, this is my be-"loved Son, in whom I am well pleaſed." A perſon, whom our Lord choſe to be the companion of his agonies and ſufferings; and whoſe negligence in time of danger and temptation, he had lately ſo kindly reproved. A perſon, who made early confeſſion of his being the Chriſt, the Son of God; for which he received a particular bleſſing and commendation. A perſon, who had that very evening profeſſed himſelf ready to go with Chriſt, "both "into priſon and death; and to lay down his life "for his ſake;" nay, he declared that "tho' all "ſhould be offended" becauſe of his maſter's ſufferings, "yet would not he;" and he no doubt thought his reſolution ſo ſecure, that he ſaid the "more vehemently, if I ſhould die with thee, yet "will I not deny thee in any wiſe." A perſon, who not only committed himſelf to the mercy of the winds and waves, at Jeſus's command, and received a moſt ſenſible convincing proof, of his Lord's almighty power, by preſerving him from ſinking; but he had alſo juſt before given a raſh and dangerous inſtance of his zeal, by wounding one of the officers who came to apprehend him. And yet, notwithſtanding all this knowledge and conviction, all ſuch warning and long experience, all his boaſted firmneſs of mind, and forward attempts to reſcue ſo dear

a maſter; this very St. Peter fell off in time of trial, denied and diſclaimed all relation to, all knowledge of, that very Jeſus; and which made the fault much more heinous in him, than it would have been in another.

As to the cauſe of St. Peter's miſcarriage, it plainly proceeded from fear. And fear is a paſſion ſo interwoven with human nature, and the principle of ſelf-preſervation, as to be the firſt dictate of reaſon; and which is ſo apt to confound our judgment where it gains power, that no infirmity more ſtrongly prevails, or is more eaſily excuſed. The beſt and braveſt minds are not exempted from ſome apprehenſions of danger. And God, who knows our weakneſs, will no doubt make gracious allowances for ſuch failings as are the unhappy effects of fear, under ſevere trials. But had St. Peter been in extremity of fear, by ſome ſudden accident, of which he had no warning to have provided againſt, much more might have been alledged in his excuſe, in abatement of his fault, than can be now done; for St. Peter had been frequently told, that hatred, perſecution, and contempt muſt be the portion of the firſt planters of the goſpel. That they muſt follow their maſter in his ſufferings, no leſs than in his virtues. That they ſhould be brought before kings and rulers for his name's ſake: nay, they were even forewarned who they ſhould fear; not them who kill the body, and after that can do no more, "but him only, who after he hath killed, "hath power to caſt into hell." This ſhould have inſpired him with courage, tho' he had been in the utmoſt danger; which yet was not his caſe: for he ſuffered nothing, and only ſaw his maſter ſuffer, what he had frequently and punctually told him, muſt of neceſſity be done. But no ill treatment was as yet begun againſt St. Peter. He was not ſo much as taken into cuſtody, nor examined by any

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perſon in authority; only ſome of the inferior ſervants put this queſtion, which ſo terrified him (tho' juſt before he had withſtood a band of armed men) that he endeavoured to clear himſelf with a moſt ſhameful falſhood, "I know not, neither under-"ſtand I what thou ſayeſt:" that is, my being with Jeſus in the garden, or belonging to him, is ſo far from being true, that I am an entire ſtranger to him.

And St. Peter did not make this denial once, but he repeated and perſiſted in it. After his firſt denial, he is ſaid to have gone out, and to have heard the cock crow, without any concern. Nay, he returns again, and mingles with the ſame company, chuſing rather to gain credit by freſh and more obſtinate denials, than to leave any jealouſy of having before ſaid an untruth. Thus another lye was added to confirm a former, and each repeated with greater eagerneſs and vehemence, till three diſtinct denials had left him paſt the excuſes either of forgetfulneſs, inadvertency, or a ſurprize, which a ſingle denial might have ſuggeſted in mitigation of his crime. But what is yet a much greater degree of guilt, St. Peter bound theſe denials with voluntary oaths and curſes, in order to have a notorious falſhood believed. And what could be more dreadful, than thus to call God as a witneſs, and to imprecate his judgment upon his own head, in a thing ſo utterly falſe? A thing which he ought to have eſteemed his honour and greateſt advantage, and to have owned his being Chriſt's diſciple, even at the hazard of his very life. Such were the ſad circumſtances of this apoſtle's fall, every way unworthy of St. Peter's eminence, provoked thereto by ſo ſlight an occaſion; ſo baſe was he in renouncing of his maſter, ſo impious and blaſphemous in his perjuries againſt him. All which I have repreſented as the evangeliſts have done; not

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with any envious deſign to leſſen our eſteem for this glorious ſaint, but that by ſetting this action in its worſt light, we may profit by his ſin, be inſtructed by his danger, and take care to ſtand the faſter for his fall.

This paſſage of ſcripture ſhould convince us of the miſerable frailty even of the beſt men, and effectually ſubdue thoſe vain confidences which are apt to riſe in our hearts, from our own ſuppoſed ſtrength and virtue. For what a ſad inſtance have we before us, of a great man, falling in the moſt ſcandalous manner? Who ſhall hereafter dare to depend upon the higheſt degree of knowledge, when one ſo wiſe, ſo perfectly ſatisfied in the Chriſtian truth, was after the fulleſt convictions of his own conſcience, ſo weak and frail, as to deny and abjure his Lord, who taught and bought him? Who may preſume upon his beſt reſolutions, when he who declared ſo firm a purpoſe of adhering to Jeſus, did within a few hours after, ſo peremptorily and ſolemnly diſown that very perſon, for whom he was ſo lately ready and diſpoſed to lay down his life? Indeed there is no reaſon to doubt but St. Peter at that time ſpake the very ſenſe of his ſoul; that he had an honeſt and ſincere mind, and was ſtedfaſtly determined, and, as he thought, able to perform, what with ſo much piety and affection, he intended and profeſſed. But his misfortune was, that he did not conſider the infirmities of human nature, but in the warmth of his zeal, promiſed more than he could do. He relied upon his own integrity, thinking good reſolutions a ſufficient defence againſt the moſt violent temptations. But when the aſſault was made, and danger drew near, the event proved, that how willing ſoever the ſpirit might be, yet the fleſh was at the beſt exceeding frail and weak. And if this great champion ſo ſoon gave ground, how ſhall we be able to engage in this ſpiritual combat?

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ſince few of us have the ſame knowledge and wiſdom, courage and reſolution, zeal and love for our maſter, to aſſiſt us in our encounters that he had? who of us would reſolve to die with Chriſt, rather than deny him? and yet the moſt ſerious and ſincerely reſolved may fail in time of trial. We have in St. Peter a ſad experiment for our inſtruction. The opinion of his own ſtrength proved his ruin. So dangerous and fatal is it to lean to our own underſtanding, to be wiſe, good and ſafe in our own conceits; when all our ſufficiency, all our ſafety, is of God.

In the apoſtle we have a mortifying example of ſpiritual ſecurity, who undertook ſo much and performed ſo little; and his experience ſhould admoniſh us, that whoſoever is kept unto ſalvation, it muſt be thro' faith, and by the power of God. There is a ſecret hand that inſenſibly directs, governs, and eſtabliſhes our hearts. God gives us grace and inclines our wills to do what is right. If we eſcape temptations, and maintain our ground when they aſſault us, it is becauſe God ſupports us with courage, confirms our reſolutions, and enables us to gain the victory in the day of trial. Suſtained by theſe divine ſuccours, we are more than conquerors; but without theſe, we become a cheap and eaſy prey. Had St, Peter's apprehenſion of danger and diffidence of his own abilities been greater, the event of his conflict had been leſs diſhonourable. But in him we learn how wretched the beſt of men are, when left to ſtand upon their own bottom. That in all our ſpiritual encounters, it is the ſafeſt and moſt prudent way to diſtruſt our own endeavours, and to watch and pray. To watch diligently, becauſe we are frail and apt to be overtaken. To pray fervently becauſe without our aſking, we cannot obtain divine aſſiſtance, and muſt expect to be

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vanquiſhed. But we ſhall be able to do all things "thro' Chriſt that ſtrengthens us."

Let us from this example learn, to keep as much as poſſible out of the way of temptation. This was St. Peter's great fault. We are commanded to pray, that God would not lead us into temptation; but then we muſt uſe our own endeavours, and not ruſh upon miſchiefs we might avoid. There are few of ſo confirmed virtue, as to withſtand great and hazardous encounters; we ſhould therefore act ſolely upon the defenſive. The approaching near to ſin, is like playing upon the bank of a precipice. We ſhould therefore run as few hazards as we poſſibly can. We muſt labour to ſubdue our paſſions, and not provoke them to riſe in rebellion againſt us. We muſt aſk and improve the grace of God, and if plentifully endued with it, we ſhould not try dangerous experiments. And then, if the providence of God brings trials upon us (and which all our prayers and prudence may not be able to prevent) we may reaſonably hope his grace will be magnified, in reſcuing us from our difficulties. But we muſt not expect this, where our own indiſcretion involves us, and is the cauſe. We are to take up our croſs when our Lord commands us, but we are not to ſeek it; for we may honeſtly and with a good conſcience endeavour to eſcape it. For all the promiſes of grace and our belief of them, ſuppoſe the uſe of proper means; the firſt and beſt of which is, to prevent our danger. No conſiderate Chriſtian will lay himſelf open to ſin, only becauſe he knows God is more powerful to preſerve, than the devil to deſtroy. For the dangers which we chuſe, and bring upon ourſelves, have no right to his protection.

We ſhould alſo be careful to avoid temptations, in regard the commiſſion of one ſin, draws on to more and greater. Thus St. Peter after one denial

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proceeded to a ſecond and third, and this with falſe oaths and horrid curſes, which greatly aggravated the crime. And it is the ſame in other caſes; ſinful acts will grow into habits, which by cuſtom waſte the conſcience, and by degrees deſtroy the very beſt principles. For when men do an ill thing to eſcape ſome preſent inconvenience, if they find themſelves preſſed, and are gone too far to retreat with honour and ſafety; they will then endeavour to diſengage themſelves, by more obſtinate degrees of ſin: He who is forced to drudge on in a courſe of wickedneſs, from the difficulty and ſhame of retracting his former errors, is a moſt abandoned wretch. And when once the reproaches of a man's mind is broken thro', he lies at the mercy of every freſh temptation; and only wants opportunities of becoming every day more profligate. This is more eſpecially evident in the caſe of lying, which ſin comes neareſt to this of St. Peter. What pains will men take to gain credit by repeating and confirming with lyes what they have done amiſs. This ſettles into a habit of falſhood, till they have loſt all regard to honeſty and truth, the checks of conſcience, or the vengeance of Almighty God. And yet the event proves like that of St. Peter's, to entangle themſelves in the ſnare; and the more they ſtruggle to get rid of their difficulties, the more they aggravate their ſin, and expoſe their reputation. So that the wiſeſt, ſafeſt, and ſhorteſt method, is always to ſtick faſt to our duty. For truth and honeſty will ſupport us, when all the ſhufflings and tricks of wicked craft, will forſake and betray us. And this ought well to be conſidered, by ſervants, children, and all who are under authority.

From hence we may obſerve the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, in cauſing the faults and infirmities of his ſaints, to be recorded in holy ſcripture,

ture, and the uſe we ought to make of their failings and temptations. Their eminent virtues, and their as eminent repentance where they did amiſs, are remembered as a ſeaſonable warning, and to be an humiliation to all future ages; by letting us ſee, that the moſt perfect are ſtill but men; ſubject to mighty blemiſhes and imperfections, and that the higheſt and pureſt ſtate, is no ſecurity from danger. This ſhould make us very tender, how we judge and deſpiſe our brethren; whoſe faults, how ſeverely ſoever we may cenſure them, might probably be our own, were we in their circumſtances, and ſurrounded with their temptation. "For let him that "thinketh he ſtands, take heed leſt he fall." We ſhould not then promiſe ourſelves ſafety and freedom from temptation, in any circumſtances in life; or ſo far preſume on our virtues, as to think we are incapable to commit the blackeſt vices, ſhould God withdraw his grace, and leave us to ourſelves. But the miſcarriages of ſuch worthies ſhould awaken our care, mortify our vanity, and remind us of our dependance upon a higher power, and to give him the acknowledgments due for all the good we do, and for not falling into evil. And as their failings admoniſh, ſo ſhould they comfort us, by conſidering that God does not utterly caſt off his ſervants when they have heinouſly offended him. That we ought not to deſpair, tho' our tranſgreſſions are many and great; for if we will return and make amends for our paſt offences, we ſhall be kindly received and freely pardoned. But St. Peter's fall will afford no juſt ground of comfort to any but ſuch as are careful to riſe again with him. As his ſin is a warning, ſo is his repentance. They who blame his ſin, ſhould remember his ſorrow; and if they abhor the one, let them ſtrive to imitate the other. This leads me to conſider his repentance, and to draw from thence ſuch reflections as may

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be uſeful to all Chriſtians in general; more eſpecially to ſuch, who by a ſinful courſe have rendered a deep and ſolemn repentance neceſſary for reſtoring them to the favour of an offended God.

The firſt thing obſervable in St. Peter's repentance is, that which gave occaſion to this change; and this was the crowing of the cock. The firſt crowing made no impreſſion on him, but the ſecond did; and this "because the Lord turned and looked "upon Peter, and Peter then remembered the words "of the Lord." This glance of our Lord falling in with the crowing of the cock, awakened his mind, and made him ſenſible of his fault. For "he re-"membered the words that Jeſus had ſaid," and then perceived, how ſhamefully he had fallen from his boaſted courage and conſtancy! how frail and unſtable his ſtrongeſt reſolutions had proved! how eaſily he had been betrayed into a crime, of which he could not believe himſelf capable! how baſe he had been to ſo kind a maſter; how falſe to his own purpoſes; how regardleſs of truth, and peremptory in a moſt notorious falſhood? how profane in the oaths and curſes, by which he had bound it on his conſcience? For by this remembrance, no doubt is meant, his repreſenting to himſelf the offence he had committed, in the blackeſt colours, with all the dreadful aggravations attending it; which proved ſo ſhocking, that he could no longer refrain from tears.

It is obſervable, that when St. Peter thought of his behaviour, he wept, he immediately burſt out into tears; "he went out and wept bitterly:" thereby intimating the ſuddenneſs and extremity of his grief. His reflection upon what he had done, produced in him a very ſerious and hearty ſorrow. The horrors of his mind expreſſed itſelf, by the abundance of his tears. And every thing conſpired to encreaſe the anguiſh of his ſpirit. For, beſides the

the many particular circumſtances that heightened his guilt, and embittered the remembrance of his offence; the kindneſs of his maſter, who in the midſt of ſufferings had a compaſſionate look in reſerve to reclaim him, muſt greatly add to his aſtoniſhment and concern. There being nothing more apt to ſoften a man's heart, and bring him to a ſenſe of his own vileneſs and ingratitude, than the receiving ſome undeſerved kindneſs from a perſon whom he hath heinouſly injured. And what higher indignity could St. Peter put upon his Lord, than to diſown and abjure him? What greater kindneſs could our Lord ſhew to this revolting, ungrateful man, than by the ſilent, but ſignificant rebuke of his eye, to call him back to himſelf? what could more inwardly affect St. Peter than ſuch an inſtance of mercy and tenderneſs? ſuch as declared, that tho' as a wicked ſervant he had diſclaimed his maſter, yet that his maſter was ſo gracious, as not to diſcard and forſake him. This, no doubt, was one of the bittereſt ingredients in St. Peter's ſorrow.

There is another thing neceſſary to be obſerved, which is the thorough change wrought in St. Peter by this godly ſorrow; and the ample amends he afterwards made, for all the diſhonour this denial of Chriſt could poſſibly reflect upon himſelf, his maſter, or the Chriſtian religion. For immediately after our Lord's reſurrection, we find the ſame ardent affection, as bright in him as ever. This once diſmayed St. Peter caſt himſelf into the ſea, impatient to get to Jeſus on ſhore. He with undaunted zeal aſſerted the reſurrection and divinity of that Saviour he had formerly denied. He deſpiſed the rebukes and menaces of the Jewiſh rulers, telling them that "God was to be obeyed ra-"ther than men," and therefore would declare the truths he had ſeen and heard. He perſiſted in his

preaching, and moſt willingly offered his perſon to ſcourging and impriſonment; "rejoicing that he "was counted worthy to ſuffer ſhame, for the "once abjured name of Jeſus." And he did at laſt glorify God, by the ſame kind of tortures and death which his maſter underwent; nay, and gladly received the notice of it from Chriſt's own mouth. This ſettled and deliberate fidelity was a noble compenſation for the infirmity, fears, and violent tranſport of his fall. This ſhewed what the man was, when himſelf, and ſupported by God's grace; as alſo what he was when deſtitute of heavenly ſuccours, depending on his own ſtrength, and left to his own paſſions. So that whatever he did amiſs thro' frailty, and in a hurry, he thus undid again in cool and deliberate acts. I ſhall now make a few reflections upon St. Peter's repentance, and which may be of uſe to all Chriſtians.

And from the conſideration of this inſtance, it will not be difficult to form right notions of God's promiſes to good men, in regard to temptations. God hath not engaged that virtue ſhall never be in danger, for this would prevent the proofs of our fidelity, and the trial of our conſtancy; but we are to ſupport our ſpirits with thoſe aſſiſtances of his grace, which may enable us to reſiſt temptations. And if thro' the infirmity of our corrupt nature, and the violence of temptation, we happen to fall into ſin, his grace will not be wanting to raiſe us again by repentance. Thus our Lord prayed for St. Peter, that his faith might not fail; or, that he might not fall finally away. Chriſt did not pray for the prevention of his ſin, but for his converſion and amendment after it. The grace of God is never ſo conſpicuous, and ſo glorioufly triumphs over the power of Satan, as when it revives miſerable offenders from the death of ſin, to the life of righteouſneſs. And the fatal miſcarriages

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of good men, are often ſo ordered, as to turn to their greater advantage. For theſe failings have a natural tendency to awaken their care, to make them more ſenſible of their weakneſs and danger, and more vigilant to prevent it for the future, than they would othewiſe have been. They diſpoſe them to be more tender and compaſſionate to their brethren, more ſparing in their cenſures, more ready to forgive others, and more diligent to uſe their endeavours to reſtore ſuch in the ſpirit of meekneſs; when they reflect how eaſy it is to be overtaken, and how prone even the beſt men are to offend. They kindle in true penitents, a vigorous and active zeal, to make amends for the ſcandal of a bad example, by a ſtricter holineſs for the future. So little reaſon then is there for us to be delivered from temptation, or ſecure from ſinning when tempted; that the one or other is often ſo managed by the wiſdom and goodneſs of providence, as to become inſtruments of greater good; to be more effectual to obtain our own ſalvation, more ſerviceable to the glory and grace of God, and more beneficial to religion in general, than if good men had not fell or been tempted: and as St. Peter's fall confutes the error of thoſe who believe that men who once have true grace, cannot loſe it; ſo his riſing again proves, that ſuch as have loſt grace, may be reſtored and recover it again.

However, thus much muſt be acknowledged, for a terror to all ſinners; that the more wilful any man's offences have been, the harder his repentance will be, and the greater reaſon he hath to dread his being forſaken and given up by God to a reprobate mind. For God may be ſo provoked as not to afford grace neceſſary to repentance, to ſuch as have long and obſtinately abuſed and reſiſted it. But he will be more eaſily reconciled to thoſe, who have ignorance or infirmity to plead,

in excuſe of their fault. We have a remarkable inſtance of this in St. Peter and Judas. For, tho' both were guilty of a heinous offence, yet the nature of them was as different as the event. The former indeed, baſely and blaſphemouſly denied our Lord, but how came he to do this? He knew he ought not, and came fully reſolved not to do it; but the terror of his maſter's ſufferings, and the violence of his own fears, ſo confounded him, that his thoughts and judgment were not at liberty; and yet as ſoon as he returned to his reaſon, he moſt ſeverely condemned himſelf for what he had done. The fault was begun, ended, and lamented within the ſpace of two hours; and this ſhort defection was compenſated by the moſt reſolute confeſſion of Jeſus all his life after; which in ſome meaſure extenuated the heinouſneſs of his crime, and therefore our Lord mercifully allowed for the infirmities of that nature, which he was ſo intimately acquainted with, and had a kind reproving look in ſtore for him.

But no ſuch grace was extended to Judas, who had no ſuch moving circumſtances to expect it. He laboured under no difficulties or temptations, but what proceeded from ſordid covetouſneſs. His wickedneſs was the effect of deliberation, long contrivance, and ſolemn debate. He conſulted with the high prieſts and elders every circumſtance for the moſt convenient execution of his villainy. He ſet his own ſoul and his maſter's life to ſale at a vile price; continued to attend his maſter, that under the diſguiſe of friendſhip, and by a laboured hypocriſy, he might be the better able to deſtroy him. And after he had projected this wickedneſs, Jeſus gave him many hints and warnings, of the ſin and danger he was running into; and told him, it had been "better if he had never been born;" but nothing would make him alter his purpoſe. So

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that this act of Judas was meer malice, a ſettled reſolution to do wickedly. It was ſuch an act of the will as plainly ſhewed he intended to reject all faith in Chriſt and his doctrine; and to be a devil, as Jeſus called him. And the regret he afterwards felt, ſeems rather the effect of confuſion and rage, of amazement and deſpair, than any godly relenting; and far from that ſorrow, "which worketh "repentance not to be repented of." The deſign of this compariſon is to raiſe in us a juſt abhorrence of all wilful ſin, that we may not dare to act delibrately againſt our reaſon and conſcience. And if ſo deep a remorſe, if ſuch bitter tears were by St. Peter thought little enough, for a ſin of infirmity, what meaſure of grief muſt needs be due, where the will acts freely, and the choice of evil is the effect of obſtinacy, perverſeneſs, and contempt of our duty? In ſuch circumſtances we muſt be careful, that none of thoſe qualifications be wanting in our repentance, that rendered St. Peter's ſo ſucceſsful. I ſhall therefore ſhew, wherein his repentance ought to be a pattern to all returning ſinners.

And we ought to imitate him, in aſcribing the diſpoſition and inclination to repent, to the grace and favour of God. Some of the ancients compared the crowing of the cock to the outward, and the awakening look, which Jeſus gave St. Peter, to the inward call to repentance. By the outward call I mean, the preaching of the word, the advice or reproof of friends, the merciful or ſevere diſpenſations of providence, inviting or forcing men to better courſes. By the inward, thoſe kind, ſeaſonable and ſecret operations of the Holy Spirit, which incline and make a due impreſſion on our minds. And as the firſt crowing of the cock had no effect upon St. Peter, ſo theſe outward calls are often unſucceſsful, becauſe not ſeconded by God's

grace, which can only make them effectual to our reformation. But where the outward means are backed with the inward influences of the ſpirit, they then produce wonderful alterations. What reaſons God has for vouchſafing this inward call to ſome and not to others, is beſt known to his own infinite wiſdom; and it is no way requiſite for us to enquire. It is ſufficient for us to know, that the enduing "men dead in treſpaſſes and ſins," with the principle of a ſpiritual new life, is what nothing leſs than almighty power can do. Therefore whenever we feel any deſires to forſake our ſins, and lead better lives, let us found our repentance in humility; meekly acknowledge our own inſufficiency, "and that we are not able of ourſelves, ſo "much as to think one good thought, it being "God alone, who worketh in us to will and to do "of his good pleaſure: that by the grace of God "we are what we are;" and that it lies upon us to take care, that "his grace be not beſtowed in vain." Again,

Our repentance, after St. Peter's example, ought to be ſpeedy. He was no ſooner ſenſible of his fault, but he forſook his wickedneſs, and betook himſelf to prayers and tears; and if we would become true penitents, we muſt not tamper with our conſciences, and find out frivolous excuſes to defer our reformation; but ſtrike in with the firſt conviction of our minds, improve the motions of grace, and quit all occaſions of ſin whatſoever; or at leaſt carefully watch againſt the approaches of all temptations. For the continuing to approve of our ſins, is the ſame in effect, with repeating them; and he who is unwilling to part with his vices, only wants an opportunity to repeat them. Men may flatter themſelves as they will, but he that is convinced he ought to repent, and does not immediately ſet about it, is not in earneſt to leave

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his wicked ways, nor never heartily intends to repent.

And the bitterneſs of St. Peter's weeping ſhould inſtruct us, how neceſſary and efficacious a branch of repentance it is, that we ſhould have a deep and ſincere ſorrow for our ſins. This is neceſſary, becauſe the only ſatisfaction we can make to God, is the taking ſhame to ourſelves, and the being unfeignedly afflicted for all our unworthy behaviour towards him. "A broken and contrite heart is "God's ſacrifice, and ſuch an offering as he will not deſpiſe." As ſuch ſorrow is neceſſary, ſo it is of great efficacy, becauſe our care to avoid ſin will bear ſome proportion to our concern for having committed it. Hence we are commanded to turn unto the Lord "with weeping and mourning. Hence "David waſhed his bed and watered his couch "with tears. And godly ſorrow worketh repen-"tance." But remember, that ſorrow is not repentance, but works it; that is, it is only inſtrumental and very powerful to produce it.

Laſtly, we muſt imitate St. Peter, in an effectual change of manners, and ſtedfaſt perſeverance in holineſs, for the time to come; or all the reſt will ſignify nothing. And this will be the natural conſequence of our ſorrow for ſin, if it be unfeigned true and ſincere. No man needs to be cautioned to keep at a diſtance from what he hates, or apprehends extreme danger and certain deſtruction from. If this therefore be our real ſenſe of ſin, our behaviour will be agreeable to it. But beſides our own ſafety, we are bound in gratitude to Almighty God: for can we ſo well expreſs our thanks for his ineſtimable mercy, in reſcuing us from ſin and death, as by living to him, who hath thus loved us? And this can only be done, by devoting ourſelves as eagerly to the ſervice of religion, as we have formerly done to that of our luſts;

by ſtemming the torrent of profaneneſs and impiety, and endeavouring all we can to promote goodneſs in the world; by being eminently conſpicuous in thoſe virtues which are moſt directly contrary to the vices we formerly indulged; and by our active charity to our brethren, in all things conducing to the welfare of their ſouls and bodies.

And when we have thus far followed St. Peter's example, we muſt not ſuppoſe, that our pardon or good acceptance with God is owing to any deſert of our own good works; or that our deepeſt ſorrow can make any ſatisfaction to God. For as St. Peter's faith did therefore "not fail, becauſe Chriſt "prayed, that it might not;" ſo our reſtoration and the efficacy of our repentance, is entirely the effect of the merits and interceſſion of the ſame kind Saviour. He only could reconcile offended God, and ſinful man. And therefore when we draw near to God, let us not forget to beg, that the intolerable burden of our ſins may be removed, not in preſumption of our "own righteouſneſs, "but in confidence of his manifold and great mer-"cies;" let us humbly beſeech him, "for his "Son our Lord Jeſus Chriſt his ſake, that he "would forgive us all that is paſt; and grant, that "we may ever hereafter ſerve and pleaſe him in "newneſs of life, to the honour and glory of his "holy name, thro' the ſame Jeſus Chriſt our "Lord."

Diſcourſe LXXVIII. Abp. *Tillotſon.*

Of the DANGER and DECEITFULNESS of SIN.

Heb. iii. 13.

—Leſt any of you be hardened thro' the deceitfulneſs of ſin.

AMONG the many conſiderations which the word of God and our own reaſon offer, to diſcourage us from ſin, this is none of the leaſt, that whoever engages in a vicious courſe is likely to proceed in it; being inſenſibly led from one degree of wickedneſs to another: So that the farther he advances, the more difficult his retreat grows. All errors, as well of practice as of judgment, is endleſs; and when a man is once out of the way, the farther he goes, the harder he will find it to get right. There is great reaſon therefore, why men ſhould be often cautioned againſt the beginnings of ſin; or if they are unhappily engaged in a bad courſe, that they ſhould be wanted preſently to break it off, and without delay, leſt by degrees they are hardened in their wickedneſs, and their caſe grows deſperate and paſt remedy. To this purpoſe is the apoſtle's advice. "Exhort one another daily, whilſt it "is called to-day, leſt any of you be hardened "thro' the deceitfulneſs of ſin."

I ſhall therefore endeavour to repreſent the growing nature of ſin, and by what gradual ſteps bad habits do inſenſibly gain on men, to harden them in an evil courſe. I will alſo warn every one

one of this danger, and endeavour to reſcue them therefrom: And then conclude with a ſerious exhortation, to reſiſt the beginnings of ſin, and to depart from evil.

All actions which are not natural, but proceed from deliberation and choice, are ſomewhat difficult at firſt, for want of being exerciſed in that way, but after a little practice they become more eaſy; we then begin to take pleaſure in them, and by often and frequent repetitions, acts become confirmed habits, which is a ſecond kind of nature; and when a thing is natural to us, we many times do it without thought. This is the uſual progreſs of all habits indifferently conſidered, whether good or bad. But vicious habits have a greater advantage, being of a quicker growth. For the corrupt nature of man, is a rank ſoil, in which vice eaſily takes root, and thrives apace. The mind of man muſt be cultivated and prepared with great care and pains, for piety and virtue; but vices are weeds that grow wild, and ſpring up of themſelves. They are in ſome ſort natural to the ſoil, and therefore need not be planted and nouriſhed. So that vice having this advantage from our nature, is the reaſon we are ſo eaſily tempted to it. But that we may the more clearly diſcover the progreſs of ſin, and by what ſteps vice gains on men, it may be proper to obſerve the ſeveral gradations of it.

No man is perfectly wicked at once, but begins with ſmaller ſins. There are certain rudiments of vice, in which men are firſt entered, and then they proceed by degrees to greater and more enormous crimes. Vice hath its infancy, and ſeveral ſtates of growth. Men are not ſo totally degenerated, as not to be aſhamed when they firſt venture on a known ſin, tho' but ſmall in compariſon; and are very ſolicitous to palliate and hide their faults,

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by excuſes: but after they have frequently committed them, and they become too viſible to be concealed; then they will juſtify, and by degrees take pleaſure in them, and in thoſe who do the ſame things. And after men are once initiated in theſe leſſer ſins, it prepares and diſpoſes them for greater. A ſinner by degrees will grow ſo deſperate, as to attempt thoſe crimes, which at firſt he could not think of committing without horror. Like Hazael, who when he was told by the prophet Eliſha, what barbarous cruelties he ſhould be guilty of, towards the people of Iſrael, when he ſhould come to be king of Syria; he abominated the very thought, and ſaid, "is thy ſervant a dog "that he ſhould do theſe things?" and yet for all this he did it afterwards. Indeed, when a ſinner is firſt tempted to the commiſſion of any groſs and notorious ſin, his conſcience is apt to ſtartle at it, and he does it with great regret; the terrors of his mind, and the fears of damnation, are very troubleſome to him; but this wears off by degrees, and what at firſt was difficult, by frequent practice and long cuſtom becomes tolerable. And when a man hath thus put off ſhame, which is one of the greateſt reſtraints from ſin that God hath planted in human nature, there little remains to deter him from all manner of wickedneſs: After this, men come to approve of their vices. For if their judgments do not command their wills, and reſtrain their luſts, in proceſs of time, their vicious inclinations will put a falſe biaſs on their judgments, and then it is no wonder for men to boaſt of their ſins, and glory in their vices, when they think them generous and commendable qualities. Nay, many have acquired ſuch a habit of ſome ſins, as not to obſerve when they commit them. To give an inſtance or two: Some are ſo accuſtomed to ſwearing, that they cannot avoid uſing an oath or two in every ſentence.

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And others have told an untruth ſo often, and averred it with ſo much confidence, as themſelves to believe true, what they knew at firſt to be a lye.

When men are arrived to this pitch of wickedneſs, then they endeavour to draw in others, and to make proſelytes to their vices; and not content to ſin on their own ſingle account, they become teachers of ſin, and miniſters of unrighteouſneſs; they ſeduloufly propagate their lewd practices with their atheiſtical principles, and make followers and diſciples after them; this diſcovers not only a great approbation, but even fondneſs for it. And when arrived to this height of iniquity, it is natural for them to hate reproof, to reject the means of their recovery, and eſteem thoſe their greateſt enemies, who have ſo much courage and kindneſs to tell them the truth. Then all the wiſe counſels of God's word, and the moſt prudent admonitions, will ſerve only to provoke their ſcorn and paſſion. But ſurely that perſon is in a ſad ſtate, who turns the moſt effectual means of his amendment into the occaſion of new and greater ſins. And what renders the condition of ſuch much more deplorable, is, that God, for every degree of ſin, withdraws from them the grace of his holy pirit; and the devil (who works effectually in the children of diſobedience) according as men improve in wickedneſs, gets a greater and more eſtabliſhed dominion over them. For as they who are reclaimed from an evil courſe, are ſaid to be reſcued out of the ſnare of the devil, and to be turned from the power of Satan unto God; ſo the more men advance in he ways of ſin, by ſo much the farther do they depart from the influence of God's grace, his protection and providence; and thereby give the devil greater opportunities to gain the firmer poſſeſſion of them.

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And thus by paſſing from one degree of ſin to another, the ſinner becomes hardened in his wickedneſs, and inſenſibly falls into that ſad ſtate, in which without God's extraordinary grace, he muſt for ever continue. For the mind of man, when long accuſtomed to evil, and grown old in vice, is not eaſily to be rectified. The ſcripture ſpeaks of ſome, "who commit ſin with greedineſs, and drink iniquity as the ox drinketh water," with a mighty appetite and thirſt; as if they were not able to refrain from it. And to expreſs to us the miſerable condition of ſuch perſons, it repreſents them as perfect ſlaves to their vices; as having ſold themſelves to do wickedneſs, and being led captive by Satan at his pleaſure. And when men have brought themſelves to this paſs, they are almoſt under a fatal neceſſity of ſinning on. I do not mean that God hath abſolutely predeſtinated any man to ruin; but only, that by a continued courſe of wilful ſin, men may in a ſort predeſtinate themſelves to it, and chuſe wickedneſs ſo long, till they are almoſt unable to contribute any thing towards their own recovery; being ſettered in the chains, and held in the cords of their ſins. Nay, like Sampſon, not only bound by thoſe luſts they have embraced, but alſo robbed of all their ſtrength to get looſe therefrom. God grant that none of us may ever have the woeful experience of it. But I am afraid it is poſſible for a ſinner to arrive at that confirmed ſtate of impiety, as almoſt totally to looſe his liberty to be better. He may attain to that perfection in vice, as to continue bad, becauſe he would not be otherwiſe. "Can the Æthiopian change his ſkin, or the "leopard his ſpots?" is the ſcripture compariſon, to repreſent to us, how difficult is is for a man to be brought to goodneſs, who hath been long accuſtomed to do evil. One ſo deeply engaged and entangled in a bad courſe, will ſcarce have reſolution enough

enough to break from it, unleſs he is forced violently out of it by ſome ſevere affliction, ſharp ſickneſs, or terrible calamity; or by the preſent apprehenſions of death, and the terrors of a future judgment: nor will even theſe be effectual to change ſuch without an extraordinary degree of God's grace; which, conſidering the greatneſs and length of his provocations, he has very little reaſon to expect from God. Wretched man! to bring himſelf into this miſerable ſtate, out of which there is only a poſſibility of being reſcued; to provoke God ſo far, and to ſin to ſuch a prodigious height, as to have reaſon almoſt to deſpair of his grace and aſſiſtance for repentance, and of his mercy for pardon. I obſerve this, not to diſcourage the greateſt ſinners, whoſe caſe, however extremely difficult it may be, yet is not quite deſperate; but I do it to ſtop ſinners if poſſible in their evil courſes, and to diſcourage them from continuing therein, leſt they are hardened thro' the deceitfulneſs of ſin.

I ſhall now conſider the great reaſon there is to warn men of this danger, and endeavour to reſcue them out of it. The apoſtle directs this precept to all Chriſtians. "Exhort one another daily, leſt any "of you be hardened, thro' the deceitfulneſs of ſin." That is, leſt you be hardened by degrees, and finally ruined. And moſt certain, every man is obliged to do what he can to reſcue his brother from ſo imminent a danger. It is every one's place and duty, to endeavour to ſave thoſe, whom he ſees ready to periſh; much more doth it concern the miniſters of God's holy word, whoſe proper office and buſineſs it is, to exhort and warn every man, both day and night. And if we believe the threatnings of God, which we declare to others; if we have any apprehenſion of the dreadful miſery of another world, any ſenſe of our own duty and ſafety, any pity for periſhing ſouls; we cannot but be very importunate

portunate with ſinners, to conſider their danger, and ſeriouſly reflect on the miſerable event, and iſſue of a wicked life. We cannot but be earneſt with them to break off their ſins, and give glory to God by repentance, before darkneſs comes, and their feet "ſtumble on the dark mountains." When we are fully convinced that miſery and deſtruction are in their ways, and plainly ſee the evil day haſting towards them, "and deſtruction coming upon them, "like a whirlwind;" heaven above threatening them, and hell beneath moving herſelf to meet them; can we poſſibly do leſs than warn ſuch perſons, to flee from the wrath to come; and out of a ſad apprehenſion of the danger that hangs over them, to caution them againſt it, and endeavour with all our might to reſcue them from the miſery which is ready to ſwallow them up? Indeed one would think it needleſs to diſſuade men from being miſerable; and yet we ſee by experience, that ſin is of ſo ſtupifying a nature, as to make men inſenſible of their danger, tho' it be near and very terrible. We muſt therefore have hearts harder than the millſtone, if we can patiently ſee men periſh without uſing our utmoſt endeavours to ſave them; which brings me to the laſt part of this diſcourſe, I mean, ſeriouſly to exhort every one to reſiſt the beginnings of ſin, and to depart from all evil.

And I ſhall addreſs myſelf to two ſorts of perſons on the occaſion. I will endeavour to perſuade thoſe who are innocent of great crimes, to reſiſt the beginnings of ſin, leſt it gain on them by degrees; and then preſs ſuch as are engaged in a wicked courſe, ſpeedily to depart from that dangerous ſtate, leſt they are hardened thro' the deceitfulneſs of ſin. Vice may eaſily be diſcouraged at firſt; it is like a ſlight diſeaſe, which if early taken care of is ſoon cured, but grows dangerous by being neglected. The firſt approaches of ſin, and temptations

tations to it are uſually very modeſt; but if not diſcountenanced, they will preſently make bolder attempts. Every inclination to ſin, every compliance with temptations, is like going down the hill; and we cannot ſtop when we will. If we once let looſe the propenſions of our nature, we cannot govern them as we pleaſe; if we give way to preſumptuous ſins, they will quickly get dominion over us. It is much eaſier not to begin a bad courſe, than afterwards to put a ſtop thereto. It is meer deluſion for a man to imagine, he can ſet bounds to himſelf, in what is bad; to think of ſinning with great temperance, diſcretion, and government of himſelf; that he will commit this ſin, and then give over; entertain this one temptation, and after that, admit of no more. Our corrupt hearts, when once in motion, are like the raging ſea, to which we can ſet no bounds, nor ſay to it, 'hither ſhalt thou come, 'and no farther.' Sin is of a very bewitching, deceitful nature, and ſtrangely gains on men, when they give way to it. By yielding to one little vice, it diſpoſes us to greater, and the ſtrongeſt reſolutions will thereby be eaſily broken; for ſin is very fruitful, and tho' no bleſſing is annexed to it, yet it will ſtrangely encreaſe and multiply. As there is a connection of one virtue with another, ſo are vices linked together; one ſin draws many after it. The Devil, when he tempts to ſin, does as it were lay a train of ſins; and if the firſt temptation takes, it fires another. Let us therefore reſiſt the beginning of ſin, becauſe we have then the moſt power, and ſin the leaſt.

As to thoſe who are engaged in a wicked courſe, let me preſs and perſuade them, ſpeedily to depart from ſo dangerous a ſtate. And this can only be done by repentance, that is, by a real change and reformation of our lives, for herein the nature of true repentance conſiſts; without this, all the de-

vices

vices which men uſe, to get rid of the guilt of their ſins, are vain and to no purpoſe. It cannot be done by a formal confeſſion and abſolution, nor yet by a long pilgrimage, or even the pope's indulgencies. A wiſe man would much ſooner perſuade himſelf, that God will not puniſh ſin at all, than ſo eaſily forgive it, and receive to favour great offenders, on ſuch ſlight terms. Let us not deceive ourſelves, the only plain way to heaven is by a holy life and ſincere repentance. There is no getting there by tricks. And without this change of our lives, all our ſorrow, faſting, and humiliation for ſin, will ſignify nothing. For "he that waſheth himſelf after the touching of a dead body, if he touch it again, what avails his waſhing? So it is with man, that faſteth for his ſins, and doth the ſame things; who will hear his prayer, or what doth his humbling profit him?" The difference between trouble for ſin, and repentance, is, that ſorrow only reſpects paſt ſins, but repentance is chiefly preventive of ſins for the future. God therefore requires us to be troubled for our ſins, that we may reſolve to leave them.

And to oblige us to a vigorous and ſpeedy reſolution herein, let us conſider, that we have engaged too far already in a bad courſe; and that every day our retreat will grow more dangerous and difficult, and our delays make work for a deeper and longer repentance. Let us alſo remember, that "except we repent and turn, we ſhall die;" and that the evil days may ſoon overtake us. That vice is far from being mortified by age, ſince a few days continuance therein, will encreaſe the power of it; and ſo much ſtrength as we add to our diſeaſe, we certainly take from ourſelves. The deceitfulneſs of ſin appears in nothing more than in keeping us from this neceſſary work, and perſuading men to hazard all, on the unreaſonable hopes of God's mercy, and

the uncertain reſolution of future repentance; a great and dangerous habit this! Since who is fit for ſo ſerious a work as repentance, on a death bed, when we are ſcarcely capable of doing any thing? How can we be aſſured of the truth and reality of our repentance, when there is no ſufficient opportunity to try the ſincerity thereof? I deny not the poſſibility of the thing; but it is much to be feared, that the repentance of a dying ſinner is uſually like the ſorrow of a malefactor, when carried to execution. He is not troubled that he hath offended the law, but that he muſt die. So when death is ready to ſeize on the ſinner, and he feels himſelf falling into deſtruction, no wonder if he then would be glad to be ſaved; and ſeeing he can ſtay no longer in this world, would rather go to heaven than hell; and in order thereto, give ſome teſtimonies of his repentance. No wonder if then, in hopes of pardon, he makes many promiſes of amendment, and reſolutions of a new and better life. But then it is very difficult to judge, whether what is thus done under ſo great fear and force, is real or not? for as a ſick man loſes his appetite to the moſt pleaſant food, ſo likewiſe are his ſinful pleaſures, and fleſhly luſts, nauſeous to him; ſickneſs altering the temper of his body, takes off all guſt and reliſh for theſe things. Such perſons reſolve againſt ſin, juſt ſo much as a man who hath no ſtomach reſolves againſt meat. But if the ſick fit is removed, and the apprehenſions of death abate; it is to be feared his former appetite to ſin would ſoon return, with the ſame eagerneſs as before. Beſides, how can we expect God ſhould accept of our repentance at ſuch a time, when we before reſolved to put it off, till we could ſin no longer? can we think it fit for any man to ſay thus to God, in a dying hour? "Lord, now the world leaves me, I come to thee. I pray thee give me eternal life, tho' I never afforded

forded thee one good day of my life. Grant that I may live with, and enjoy thee for ever, who could never endure to think on thee. I muſt confeſs, that I could never be perſuaded to leave my ſins, out of love to thee, but I now repent of them, for fear of thee. Tho' I would never do any thing for thy ſake, yet I hope thy goodneſs is ſuch, as to forgive all the wicked actions of my life; and to accept of this forced ſubmiſſion. I pray thee not to fruſtrate and diſappoint my former reſolutions of ſinning whilſt I live, and getting to heaven when I die." Can any man think it fit to ſay thus to God? And yet I fear, this is the true interpretation of men's repentance, who defer it till they come to die.

I do not ſpeak to diſcourage repentance even at that time; it is always the beſt thing we can do. But I would by all means diſcourage men from putting off ſo neceſſary a work till then. Indeed, when it comes to this, and a ſinner finds himſelf going out of the world, if he has been ſo fooliſh, as to put things on this laſt hazard; repentance then is the ſole remedy, the only refuge he has left. And in this caſe the miniſter ought by all means, earneſtly to perſuade him to it. But when we ſpeak to men in other circumſtances, to ſuch as are well, and in health, no encouragement ſhould be given them, to venture their ſouls on ſo great an uncertainty. For at the beſt, it is a very dangerous remedy; eſpecially where men with deſign contrive to rob God of the ſervice of their beſt days, and put him off with a few unprofitable ſighs and tears, at the hour of death. And no man, who hath any worthy apprehenſions of the deity, can imagine him ſo eaſy, as to forgive men, on the leaſt word and intimation of their minds, and to have ſuch a fondneſs for offenders, as would reflect on the prudence of any magiſtrate or governor on

earth. Let us then ſincerely endeavour to live a holy and virtuous life, that we may have the comfort of it, when we come to die. Let us never be ſo unwiſe, as to venture all hopes of a bleſſed eternity on a death-bed repentance. For "as God's "mercy is great, ſo are his corrections. But "let us haſten to return to the Lord, and put not "off from day to day; leſt ſuddenly the wrath of "the Lord come forth, to deſtroy us in the midſt "of our ſecurity."

Diſcourſe LXXIX. Bp. *Hickman.*

The great DUTY of SELF-KNOWLEDGE.

Pſal. ix. 10.

Put them in fear, O Lord, that the heathen may know themſelves to be but men.

WHEN God created the heaven and the earth, and diſtinguiſhed the whole creation, in their ſeveral orders and degrees, he placed man in the middle region, between himſelf and the inferior world, that we might obey the one, and command the other. And in order to the preſerving our reſpect towards God, and our government towards the creatures, he gave us laws to inſtruct and direct our conduct, in that courſe of life, on which all our wiſdom and happineſs depends. But thro' our preverſeneſs or ſimplicity, many temptations are apt to divert us from the right way; for either a vain deſire of greatneſs, or an exceſſive love of riches and pleaſures, makes us forget our duty to God; and inſtead of walking in the ways of wiſdom, our eyes are ſo blinded with ambition, covetouſneſs, and luxury, that we degenerate into ſomething leſs than man.

To prevent this fatal miſcarriage, God has enforced his laws, by many gracious promiſes to invite us to our duty, and many dreadful threatnings to deter us from evil. When the one proves ineffectual, he will execute the other. If we are ſo

hardened and stupid, that nothing but judgments can awaken us. God will send his terrors amongst us, to make us know him; and his judgments to know ourselves. As therefore the knowledge of ourselves is a religious duty, I shall endeavour to shew the excellency and usefulness of this knowledge.

There are indeed some, who think for man to know himself, is of all knowledge the most delightful and easy. But this proceeds from our ignorance: for alas! tho' we can with ease gaze round us, be very intent upon remote concerns, yet all the while we may be utterly unacquainted with ourselves. Besides, It's an unpleasant thing for a man to look into himself, to rake into the filthiness of his own heart, and discompose the quiet of his mind; hence it is that so many men take up with a superficial and false account of their own affairs, and are often most pleased with themselves, when they have the least reason for it. And however we may think, that this fond conceit of our own worth, is only an innocent allowable mistake; yet upon examination, we shall find it such a dangerous error and disposition of mind, as will disable us from performing our several duties; for it is giving up our reason, to be guided by fantacy and humour.

He that will not take the pains to know himself, lives as it were by chance, and moves without design. He embraces vice or virtue, as they best suit his fancy or convenience; but seldom considers the excellence of his nature, or the good pleasure of his God. Thus when a conceited man has lost himself it is impossible he should maintain his proper station in life, or observe decency and justice towards men, but he will be apt to encroach upon their rights and liberties; and we must ascribe all that insolence, imposition, and violence in the world,

world, to this ignorant ſelf-love. We may as well expect meekneſs from a lion, as common juſtice from one conceited of his own worth, and full of himſelf. He that thinks himſelf ſomething more than man, will not look upon others as his fellow creatures, but takes a pleaſure and pride in deſpiſing and treating them like deſpicable worms.

From whence proceed in general, all hereſies and ſchiſms in the church, all tumults and factions in the ſtate; but from this ignorance and carnal pride, this exalting ourſelves above meaſure, and undervaluing every ordinance of God and man; but had we the ſenſe to conſider, or the grace to underſtand, what we are; we ſhall appear to be only a load of infirmities, a lump of fleſh, wherein our ſpirits are impriſoned and confined. For God knows what worthleſs, ſenſeleſs creatures we are; having nothing to boaſt of, but what we received from him; nothing but our humility to recommend us to God or man. For what is our wiſdom, goodneſs, and greatneſs, to value ourſelves upon? Whoſoever does ſo, knows not what it is to be wiſe, great, or good. In ſhort, it is nothing but ignorance that makes us ſo fond of admiring ourſelves, which occaſions all the decays of virtue, religion and government in the world; and proves how neceſſary a duty, and great virtue it is, for men to know themſelves. In order to our obtaining this knowledge, we ought to conſider, both our nature and end.

We muſt conſider our own nature, the value and ſtation we bear in the world; that ſo our behaviour may be decent and agreeable thereto. Hence ſome compare this world to a ſtage, where every perſon is to act conformably to his place and character. A prince ſhould not degrade himſelf to thoſe mean performances, which are fit and proper in a peaſant; nor a ſubject uſurp the ſtyle, or affect

the figure of a prince. But much more abſurd it is, for ignorant man, born in weakneſs and ſin, the ſon of corruption, and brother to the worms, to aſpire unto the throne of God, aſſume to himſelf abſolute power, and to think he is more than man? and no leſs ſhameful is it, that man, who is born lord of this world, heir of eternity, companion of angels, and repreſentative of God on earth, ſhould ſubmit to ſordid mean deſires; make himſelf leſs than man, even level to the beaſts that periſh. It behoves us therefore to conſider our nature and conſtitution, that we may ſeek after thoſe things that are agreeable to them. If our ſouls are our better part, and immortal, it requires our greateſt care; as being an eternal good.

We ought alſo to ſtudy our own inclinations, that we may know how to apply the advantage of religion, to the exigences of our ſouls. For there is no man ſo perfectly virtuous, but he has a tendency to ſome vice; nor is there ſcarce any ſo profligate in vice, who has not ſome remains of virtue. If therefore we know ourſelves, and our inclinations to good and evil, we may by degrees gain ground upon our vices. Some ſparks of virtue that lie covered, may with a little care be blown up into a glorious flame: and we ought to cheriſh theſe remains of goodneſs, and propagate the ſeeds of virtue. If we are hardened by ſin, we may find ſome tender part, capable of good impreſſions; and by degrees reduce the whole. Let us but learn to know ourſelves, ſee how we ſtand affected towards the vanities and vices of the world, and we ſhall ſoon diſcover our failings, which is the firſt and great ſtep towards a remedy; for then we are only to uſe our diligence and care, to ſubdue thoſe vices which are moſt predominant, and to ſet a double guard on our weakeſt ſide. But if we give the devil an opportunity to aſſault us, when unprepared, he

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wants neither ſubtlety nor malice, to take advantage, and purſue it to our ruin. Our principal care and deſign ſhould therefore be to conquer our favorite ſin, and darling luſts, and then we ſhall find no difficulty in all the reſt.

And yet how common is it, for men to neglect this, and bend their forces another way; to fortify themſelves againſt remoter dangers, thoſe luſts they have no inclination to; but as for their beloved ſin, that has taken ſhelter in their boſoms, to cheriſh and keep it up, in defiance of correction or reproof. Hence it is, that many men in appearance live very regular and zealous lives, and comply with all the outward exerciſes of religion, and yet there is no alteration in their lives, where it is moſt wanted. This is what turns godlineſs into formality, and fruſtrates the deſign of religion. This want of knowing ourſelves, is the only caſe, why ſo many people make outward profeſſion of the goſpel, and yet are inwardly never the better. But,

In order to know ourſelves, we muſt conſider the end we aim at; and uſually there are two ſorts of ends, to direct our actions, an ultimate, and an intermediate end. For every conſiderate man propoſes to himſelf ſome principal ultimate end; ſome univerſal main deſign, which he purſues in all his thoughts and actions, and makes the centre of his happineſs. Thus one man propoſes honour for his portion, another chuſes riches, a third pleaſure; and but very few are there who delight in virtue and religion; for when men once fix their choice on the meaner concerns of this world, they ſcarce think upon any thing elſe. Indeed he that propoſes to lead a virtuous religious life, may deſire a competency of the riches, honours, and pleaſures of the world; but then he quits them all, when they are inconſiſtent with his religion. And this laſt end is

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moſt deſirable, becauſe we undertake the reſt for the ſake of that.

And now let every man ſeriouſly aſk himſelf this important queſtion. What end he propoſes to himſelf, or what his buſineſs is in the world? The ambitious man will anſwer, to be great and honourable. But ſurely to come into the world like a comet, to be admired by the vulgar, and deſpiſed by the wiſe, is below the dignity of a reaſonable creature. Perhaps another will ſay, that his buſineſs here is only to take pleaſure; but does not his being here depend on God's pleaſure, and his well-being on the protection of the laws, and the good of the commonwealth? and if ſo, ought he not in gratitude, in prudence, and in conſcience, to conform to the pleaſure of God, and to be uſeful to the ſtate, and not to make his pleaſure his law, and his belly his God? Another will perhaps ſay, that his deſigns are only to grow rich; but this is a manifeſt abſurdity and contradiction. For if he would grow rich to promote the honour or pleaſure of himſelf, or his poſterity; then honour or pleaſure is his principal end, and riches are only means thereto. But if he would grow rich for the ſake of riches, he is then the moſt indigent and deſpicable man alive; being poorer to all the ends of riches, than he that has got nothing. Thus we ſee, that neither riches, pleaſures, nor honours, thoſe idols of the world, can be the principal end which a wiſe man propoſes to himſelf; for a man in the higheſt honours may be diſcontented, and not without reaſon; a man of pleaſure may be contemned, and not to be wondered at; and a man of great riches may be miſerable, even to a proverb.

Since then none of theſe things can be the ultimate deſign, the proper objects of our wiſhes; what is it we ſhould deſire, but to be happy? and as theſe

vanities

vanities cannot be our real happineſs, we muſt ſtudy to be wiſe, that we may enjoy happineſs. We muſt leave theſe amuſements to the world, to the heathen who do not know themſelves, no more than they do the God that made them. We muſt find out ſome other end more ſuitable to our nature, more worthy of our pains: which can only be the ſervice of our God, and the ſalvation of our ſouls. Here we muſt fix our hopes, and make all our actions tend; there being no other way to reconcile our worldly cares to reaſon or common ſenſe, but by making them ſubſervient to religion. Then we may deſire riches for the greater opportunity of doing good upon earth, in hopes of obtaining a greater reward in heaven. Then we may uſe innocent pleaſures for the preſervation and refreſhment of life; in order to obtain a better inheritance hereafter. Then we may fairly deſire honour and reputation in the world; that by an illuſtrious example of virtue to others, it may be the means of ſaving our own ſouls. It is this laſt end, that encourages and juſtifies all the reſt. Take away the eternal weight of glory, and how frivolous, how inſignificant are all theſe momentary pleaſures? or what will it profit us "to gain the whole world, and loſe our own ſouls?"

Having thus diſcovered what our proper end is, let us next enquire what progreſs and advances we have made towards the ſalvation of our ſouls? for with all the wiſdom of men, too few are wiſe enough to do their duty. They ſee the glorious prize before them, yet will not run ſo as to obtain, but ſlothfully acquieſce in the formalities of religion, and in an unactive faith, as if that was enough to carry us to heaven. It is ſtrange indeed, that we ſhould know religion, and the value of our precious ſouls ſo well, and yet live as we do. Our Saviour ſpeaks of taking heaven by violence, to ſhew what labours and difficulties a good Chriſtian ſhould undergo, to procure

procure the ſalvation of his ſoul; but we, by our unconcerned behaviour in this point, ſeem to expect that heaven ſhould commit a violence upon us. The apoſtles and primitive martyrs endure the ſevereſt perſecutions, impriſonments, and deaths, as examples for our imitation, and yet we can hear all this without the leaſt remorſe. The angels rejoice in heaven, "over every ſinner that repenteth;" and yet we have no joy but in our ſins. Our bleſſed Saviour relinquiſhed the boſom of his father, and ſubmitted to a moſt indigent life, and ſhameful death; and yet we who were the cauſe of this, are neither aſhamed nor troubled about it. Surely, he did not make himſelf ſo poor, only to make us rich; nor beſtow temporal honours upon us, only to gratify our ambition: theſe are below the dignity of the goſpel; prizes too mean for the Son of God to purchaſe, or the ſons of men to deſire. Much leſs did he take up his croſs, that we might indulge ourſelves in ſenſual delights. This is a contradiction to all religion. But he did it, that we might learn to follow the captain of our ſalvation, by a laborious virtue, in order by our victory to obtain a crown of glory.

Since then ambition, covetouſneſs and luſt, are thoſe corrupted principles, from whence all vicious practices grow and increaſe upon us, and this chiefly for the want of knowing ourſelves; I will now more particularly conſider, how it is, that theſe bad principles hinder this knowledge in us.

The firſt vice which dazzles our eyes, and hinders us from knowing ourſelves, is ambition. A vice to which mankind has too natural an inclination; and with this bait the devil tempted the firſt man. When our deſires take their riſe from proper grounds, and are directed to proper ends, there is a virtue in ambition. We may ſtudy to be alike God in wiſdom, if we can; and in goodneſs, if we

pleaſe.

pleaſe. But when we aim to be like him in power, and to be above reſtraint, then there is vanity in the inclination, and danger in the attempt, which makes ambition a vice. Thus the angels fell; who by endeavouring to exalt themſelves, were miſerably degraded, and degenerated into accurſed ſpirits. And yet neither the angels, nor our fore-fathers fall, can terrify us from the like preſumption; but we will be ſtill bordering upon their guilt, and flattering ourſelves, that we are ſomething more than men. We firſt learn to deſpiſe our fellow-creatures, and from thence ambitions ſoars aloft, and teaches us to defy our God; to value ourſelves upon rejecting his commands, and to think we are very great, for daring to be very wicked. This ſin of ambition, is the firſt inlet to vice. For the ſake of this idol, this meer phantom, men are contented to ſacrifice their own peace, and the quietneſs of the world, to build trophies on the ruins of other men, only to ſtand a little higher in the eye and admiration of the people.

When ambition leads a man on, every virtue muſt ſubmit to him; both juſtice and mercy muſt give way to his violence. If he can but get the ſuperiority, and appear like God, he cares not what deſtruction he brings on man, or how he diſturbs the courſe of nature. From hence tumults and factions, ſlaughters and deſolations take their riſe: for when a pampered ambition prevails, hatred and malice, rancour and revenge, like a deſtroying army attend its motions, and execute its deſigns. And can any man pretend to know himſelf, who ventures on ſuch an enterprize. For alas! how eaſily are we cruſhed, in the height of all our pride? God need not with his thunder to caſt us down; ſince one blaſt of his air, one breath of his diſpleaſure will undo us. If he only withholds our breath we die, and all our enterprizes fall to the ground. Is this

this our glory, this our pride! how contemptible is deſigning man, who miſtakes his honour, and does not know himſelf? does not know, that, "there is "neither device, nor wiſdom, in the grave, whither "he is going." Let us not then rejoice in flattering ourſelves, that we are like Gods upon earth; but that our names are written in the book of heaven. Let us not boaſt that we have made many men ſubject to our power; but that we have overcome the perverſeneſs of our wills, ſubdued our unruly paſſions, and are grown ſo wiſe, as to know, and ſo great as to command ourſelves.

The ſecond corrupted principle, which debauches our nature, and hinders us from knowing ourſelves, is covetouſneſs, or an immoderate love of wealth. In ambition, there is ſomething of generoſity, but covetouſneſs is perfectly vile and ſordid. Ambition is an overflowing of the ſpirit, but covetouſneſs ſinks us below the fleſh. It is burying ourſelves alive, and anticipating the curſe which God denounced upon us, "duſt thou art, and to duſt "thou ſhalt return." It is making us leſs than the worms, the loweſt of all the creatures; they only grovel in the duſt to ſatisfy their nature, and provide themſelves with food; but covetous man rakes without meaſure, and ſcrapes without deſign, and never thinks he has got duſt enough, till he returns to it himſelf; his appetite is never ſatisfied, till his mouth is ſtopt. It is this that occaſions all that fraud, extortion, oppreſſion and falſhood, that is practiſed among us. "Covetouſneſs is the root "of all evil."

How wonderful is it then, that man ſhould not know what it is to be a man, nor how to anſwer the ends of his nature; which moſt certainly are to improve in wiſdom, and to grow in grace, till our ſpirits are ſo refined, as to be fit to appear before God. But can this end be promoted by our growing

ing rich? all our labour of this kind, tends the direct contrary way; it is ſtifling our ſpirits under ground in the mines, when our thoughts ſhould be ſoaring up on high. Therefore, ſays the wiſe man, "get wiſdom, and with all thy getting, get underſtanding; for wiſdom is much better than gold, "and underſtanding rather to be choſen than ſilver." So many abſurdities and contradictions are involved in this one ſingle vice, that did we not ſee it practiſed, we ſhould ſcarce believe, that a man ſhould labour for he knows not what, and ſave it for he knows not whom. If we view his income, he would ſeem the moſt ſelfiſh man in nature; but if we conſider his expence, he is certainly the moſt ſelf-denying man alive.

But there is another powerful principle of vice within us, which hinders us from knowing ourſelves, and from purſuing our proper end, and that is luſt, or an immoderate deſire of pleaſure. There is nothing ſo eaſily impoſed upon, as a man of pleaſure; for he judges of things only by his ſenſe, which is the moſt deceitful judge in nature. How ſhameful is it, for a man to ſet aſide his reaſon and virtue, his underſtanding and religion, and devote himſelf to a ſlothful, ſenſual life? To be ſo unacquainted with himſelf, and forgetful of his ſoul, as to employ all his time to entertain his body? But we are too apt to get into a habit of ſenſuality, before we are aware, and to like it we know not why.

However, I would not be thought to undertake ſo needleſs and unneceſſary a work, as to perſuade men from pleaſure in general, ſince God not only allows, but allots it for our uſe; nor would I abſolutely condemn even the pleaſures of ſenſe, or ſet nature and religion at variance. My only intention is to ſhew, that what we call pleaſure, is not really ſo, but only a childiſh fluttering ſtate of life, too light and airy to build any ſolid ſatisfaction upon.

upon. We think it agreeable to our nature, but this is a miſtake; for it firſt debauches that, before we can approve it: and then what we call our nature, is nothing but our corruption; ſo that we are firſt corrupted, and then deſtroyed. And therefore ſince our pleaſures are not to be extinguiſhed in us, it is abſolutely neceſſary, that they ſhould be regulated and reformed; ſo that our pleaſure may be agreeable not only to our ſenſe, but to the principles of our reaſon and religion, and conſiſtent with our happineſs.

Thus we have conſidered the three vicious corrupted principles within us, which make us forſake the law of our nature, and the commandments of God, and keep us from knowing ourſelves, namely, ambition, covetouſneſs and luſt. With one or other of theſe vices, every man in ſome meaſure is poſſeſſed; and it is our duty to find out which of them it is, that by knowing our darling ſin, where our death and danger lies, we may correct, and put a ſtop to the growing evil, before it becomes deſperate. And we cannot but obſerve of all thoſe vices, that tho' they may divert us for a time, and give ſome preſent deceitful ſatisfaction, yet they can never ſettle us in a ſtate of eaſe and happineſs. An ambitious man is above, and a luxurious man beſide himſelf. He who is truly virtuous and contented, is the only man, that under all the turns of fortune in this world, maintains his ſtation, and ſtands his ground. He neither flies too high, thro' a vain ambition, nor deſcends too low, through covetouſneſs or ſenſual luſts; but with an equal temper of mind, and a perfect indifferency to all things human, he enjoys the ſmiles, and deſpiſes the frowns of fortune; he is undiſturbed at the courſe of this world, is unmoved at the chances and motions of this tranſitory life, becauſe he has a dearer concern, a better portion in the world to come.

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Was such a man so established in virtue, and settled in his principles, but seriously to reflect on the common practices and folly of the world; would his better thoughts, his diviner contemplations, give him leave to see with what eagerness, hurry and zeal, the men of this world strive to ruin themselves and others; how they will alike trample upon the necks of friend and foe, to promote some little paulty vile designs; how would he stand amazed at this world, and conclude, that hell itself could not be a more wicked place? When he sees with what fury, malice and revenge, they persecute those who dare oppose the interests of their ambition, covetousness, or lust; how earnestly would he pray, that God would deliver him from such a savage race? How zealously would he wish to enjoy some private retirement where he may enjoy calmer days, and in perfect serenity of mind, taste the sweets and relish the joys of a quiet conscience and a favourable God. In this happy state, he will find riches, honours and pleasures in abundance; such pleasures as the sensual man never heard of; such riches as the covetous man never saw; such honours as the ambitious man can never possess: perfect peace and tranquility of mind, undoubted security and establishment of heart, are the certain portion of that man, "who knows himself, and "fears his God."

But if our ambition, covetousness, or lusts have so far got the ascendancy of us, as that religion can make no impression upon us; then God will find such other ways to work upon us, as we shall soon repent of. If our hearts are never so hardened, yet there are two arrows of God, that will be sure to reach us; calamity and death. Calamity is one effectual method which God uses, to make us know ourselves. When he strips us of all our gaudy plumes, and sends us despicable and almost naked into that

world, where we before took ſo much pride; then we ſhall not only know, but deſpiſe and condemn ourſelves, for our paſt folly. When poverty and ſhame come upon us, and deprive us of that armour, which our ambition and covetouſneſs hath cloathed us with; then we ſhall wiſh for "the breaſt-plate "of righteouſneſs, and the ſword of the ſpirit;" and confeſs that one grain of faith is better than many talents of gold and ſilver; than all that pomp which our ambition can deſire; than all that treaſure which our covetouſneſs could rake up, or our luxury ſquander away. When our haughty looks ſhall be brought down, our deceitful honours taken from us, we ſhall no more truſt to the ſmiles of fortune, nor believe the flatteries of men; but learn impartially to examine the condition of our ſouls, and ſee how unhappy that man muſt be, who does not chuſe virtue for his ornament, and God for his defence. Proſperity is deceitful, but adverſity gives us a full view, and free acceſs to our own boſoms, and ſhews what is there amiſs; it corrects the ſwellings of our hearts, aſſuages the overflowing of our pride, and plainly proves, that there is no true genuine pleaſure, but in being virtuous; no ſolid greatneſs, but in being humble; that the way to be happy men, is to "know ourſelves to be but "men."

The laſt method of providence to reclaim us, and make us know ourſelves, is death. When this ſad ſpectacle holds the glaſs, and ſhews our ghaſtly face; then to our ſorrow we ſhall ſee of what we are made, and to what we muſt return. When this body of ours, upon which we have beſtowed ſo much pains, at the expence of our precious ſouls, is now ſinking into nothing; how will all our pride and pleaſure die before us? We ſhall then be convinced, that we muſt die like men, and ſoon become duſt and aſhes. To what purpoſe then

ſhould

ſhould we contrive mighty projects, and lay vaſt deſigns, when death may overtake us in the height of our vanity, and ſtifle our ambition in the birth. Alas! what a tame inoffenſive thing is man, when death has laid his hands upon him! The very apprehenſion of death checks our extravagance, allays our heats, ſubdues our unruly wills, ſuppreſſes our vicious affections, and brings our minds into temper, and our hearts into a proper frame. But then we muſt have theſe apprehenſions of death in time, leſt it be too late; leſt it does not lead us to a new life, but carry us to a dreadful judgment, where we ſhall be made to know ourſelves to our eternal ſorrow and ſhame.

Diſcourſe LXXX. Dr. *Barrow.*

The DUTY of MINDING our own BUSINESS.

1 Theſſ. iv. 11.

——Study to be quiet, and to do your own buſineſs.

THO' according to the general tenor of ſcripture and of our religion, we are in charity obliged to be heartily concerned for, and earneſtly to promote the good of our neighbour; and ſo far to interpoſe and meddle in the affairs of others, as to endeavour their good, and to inſtruct and adviſe, admoniſh and reprove them on occaſion, as alſo to offer them our aſſiſtance and help: Yet St. Paul directs and enjoins us, "to ſtudy to be quiet and mind "our own buſineſs." This ſeeming contradiction or difference is a difficulty that ought to be reconciled and cleared up; and which I ſhall attempt in the following method. I will ſhew when it is allowable or commendable for us to meddle with the affairs of others, and when not: then propoſe ſome general rules and proper directions in the diſcharge of this duty. And laſtly offer ſome conſiderations to diſſuade men from a criminal interfering or meddling with the concerns of others.

Superiors may intermeddle with the buſineſs of inferiors, in all things concerning the proper diſcharge of their duty. Magiſtrates may inſpect the behaviour, examine the actions, reprehend and puniſh the offences of their ſubjects; parents may adviſe,

viſe, rebuke and correct their children; miniſters of the goſpel may admoniſh and reprove the people committed to their charge. If theſe things are performed with prudence, equity, and moderation, then do ſuch mind their own buſineſs, it being the proper work which God and reaſon require of them, and therefore they are not culpable. Again,

Wherever the honour and intereſt of God is concerned, we may interpoſe to vindicate and maintain them. If any man dares to blaſpheme God or contemn religion, we ought to rebuke him; if any divine truth is denied, we are to defend it, and to reprove ſuch as notoriouſly tranſgreſs againſt the laws of God; to do this, every man is obliged as God's ſubject. Thus did Elias maintain the true worſhip of God, againſt the kings and the whole nation of Iſrael who had corrupted it; thus did the prophets rebuke the wickedneſs of princes, prieſts, and people in their time; thus John the baptiſt reproved king Herod for his unlawful practices; thus did our Saviour cenſure the ſuperſtitious hypocritical ſcribes, and chaſtiſe the profaners of God's houſe. We may alſo rebuke him that ſlanders or reproaches our prince, and reſtrain or check him that breaks the peace, or would violate the laws; for every man is a ſoldier againſt traitors and enemies of his country; every man is obliged to defend the public againſt thoſe who would ruin it; to defend his prince againſt rebels, and the laws againſt ſuch as would break and diſturb the peace. We may alſo help an honeſt man againſt a thief aſſaulting him, and guard another's life againſt an aſſaſſin; we may vindicate the reputation of an innocent perſon when aſperſed; we may repel thoſe who attack our ſafety or peace, invade our goods, or traduce our name; we may endeavour to defeat their deſigns and reſtrain their violence. If we ſee our neighbour expoſing his life to any hazard, or running into

any great ſin, we may by friendly admonition, advice, or reproof, even without his will, endeavour to reclaim or reſtrain him. It is innocent, juſt and laudable for us to watch over and be careful of our neighbour's welfare, ſo as it be done out of pure charity, after a diſcreet quiet and gentle manner. If an opportunity offers of doing our neighbour any conſiderable good, we may lawfully, and in charity ought to embrace it; and if he is ſo blind as not to perceive our good will, ſo peeviſh as to diſlike it, or ſo ungrateful as not to thank us for it; yet our kind intentions will juſtify us before God, and acquit us at the bar of reaſon; and to countenance us therein we have the example of good men, who for ſo doing have worthily been eſteemed the friends and benefactors of mankind. For duty to our ſuperiors, juſtice and charity to one another, a juſt regard to our own welfare, allow and oblige us in ſuch and the like caſes, to intermeddle without offending; ſince in theſe inſtances, we may truly be ſaid to be quiet and to do our own buſineſs, becauſe we thereby act agreeably to God's laws and right reaſon. There is no buſineſs more proper for us than to promote God's glory and procure the good of men, this being the principal deſign of God's ſending us into the world.

But then we ſhould never out of ambition, covetous deſire, or ſelf-conceit, ſo meddle, as to invade or aſſume the exerciſe of any man's office. We muſt not preſume to meddle with our ſuperiors, ſo as to adviſe or reprehend them, to blame or cenſure their proceedings; for this is to confound the right order of things, to go beyond the bounds of our calling and ſtation; and even worſe than to aſſume the enſigns of their dignity. It is too common for private perſons to invade the office, to exerciſe the duties, and to controul the actions

tions of their ſuperiors; to preſcribe them laws, to murmur at, and inveigh againſt what they enact. But to make, alter, or reverſe laws, belongs to the higheſt authority; and therefore to arrogate this to ourſelves is the moſt egregious preſumption. To direct our governors, is in effect to depoſe them and appoint ourſelves; and what greater injury can we do the public? By attempting ſuch things we confound the ranks and orders of men, and interrupt the public tranquility; than which, what more enormous miſchief can we do: As God hath appointed his repreſentatives and miniſters to deliberate and conclude what is to be done, and that to him they are accountable; our duty is to ſubmit and obey. If we act otherwiſe we are undutiful to God and our ſuperiors, and forget the precepts of our religion, that where the "word of a king is, there is "power; ſubmit to every ordinance of man for the "Lord's ſake; deſpiſe not government, nor ſpeak "evil of dignities." There is a kind of ſacredneſs in the ſecrets of government. As the myſteries of faith ſurpaſs natural reaſon, ſo thoſe of ſtate tranſcend vulgar capacity. And as God employs princes in the great work of governing the world, makes them inſtruments of his providence, and is not wanting to aſſiſt and direct them in the diſcharge of their duty; ſo according to the reaſon of things, they by means of their high ſtation and peculiar advantages, are better able to judge of and know affairs than others; having by experience and conſtant practice acquired a ſuperior knowledge in ſuch things, and how to manage them.

Nor ſhould we ſo meddle with the concerns of our equals, as to controul or direct, check or cenſure their proceedings, without good reaſon for it; ſince this is to uſurp an undue authority, and implies ſelf-conceit, immodeſty and arrogance. For every man ſhould have leave to manage his own bu-

ſineſs in the method he beſt likes, conſiſtent with law and juſtice, without interruption. This is what every man deſires, and hath a right, and which all are generally capable of doing. Indeed, as every man is moſt concerned in the ſucceſs or diſappointment of his own endeavours, ſo it is but juſt and equal that he ſhould have liberty to act as he pleaſes in his own affairs: eſpecially in concerns of leſs moment. In matters innocent and indifferent, ſuch as diet, dreſs, diverſion and pleaſure, it is moſt reaſonable that every man ſhould pleaſe himſelf. This all men like, and therefore we ſhould not attempt to hinder it.

In converſation, we ought not to impoſe our opinions on others. When we converſe with our equals, tho' we may offer our judgment and declare our reaſons for it, yet if neither is regarded, we ought to be ſilent; to preſs farther is rude, to be diſpleaſed thereat is vain, to be angry is unreaſonable. For by the law of converſation every man has a right to uſe his own reaſon; and whoever aims to deprive another of it, will be very ill eſteemed. Nor ſhould we affect to teach others, for this implies a pretence to ſuperiority in wiſdom, which ſhews vanity, and is offenſive to thoſe we converſe with. Indeed we may modeſtly diſpute the caſe with our equals, as fellow ſtudents of knowledge, or advocates of truth; but we muſt not peremptorily dictate or pronounce with authority, like maſters or judges. We ſhould be cautious not to interrupt any man's diſcourſe, or take his words out of his mouth; this is rude, as it ſuppoſes impertinency in another, or that we are wiſer than they. We ſhould not intrench on any man's modeſty, by ſo commending or reflecting on him, as to make him bluſh or expoſe him to ſcorn. Sober men like not to be the ſubject of diſcourſe, or the object of ſport. We ought to be cautious of talking abou

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the affairs of others, or to give characters of any one; and yet this is the practice of ſome buſy people, who will do nothing themſelves, but reflect on the actions of others. We ſhould not be inquiſitive about the deſigns, nor preſs into the retirements of men; to do ſo, is immodeſt, rude and unjuſt. It is immodeſt to deſire to know, what another is aſhamed or unwilling to tell; it is rude to diſturb any man in his lawful enjoyment, to interrupt his converſing with himſelf, to obſtruct his private ſatisfactions; it is unjuſt to hinder a man from doing what he beſt likes, and perhaps is greatly concerned in; as that of enjoying his own thoughts, conſidering his affairs, examining his own behaviour, ſtudying of truth, performing his devotion to God, and of promoting the welfare of his ſoul. He retires on purpoſe to avoid diverſion, or to be maſter of his time and thoughts; how unkind and unjuſt therefore muſt it be, to deprive him of his pleaſure and ſuch real advantages?

To pry into the ſecrets of others is alſo very blameable, it being a moſt impertinent curioſity. To break open the cloſet of a man's breaſt, to ranſack his mind, to pilfer his thoughts, affections and deſigns, is moſt injurious to him, and the worſt of robberies. To peep into holes, to liſten at doors or windows, to open letters and papers, and ſuch like practices, is highly criminal, and which common humanity will not endure. Indeed, a wiſe man would not deſire to know the ſecrets of others, but gladly ſhun them, that ſo he may be free from the burthen of keeping them, and the danger of diſcovering them. Laſtly, we ſhould not lie in wait to ſurprize or take advantage of another, to inſult on his miſtake or misfortune; to do thus is always ill manners, ſometimes barbarous inhumanity. In ſuch caſes, goodneſs would rather incline

a man to ſupport, comfort, and relieve another. I proceed

To give ſome general rules and directions concerning our meddling in the affairs of others. I ſhall only mention that of advice, reproof, and interpoſing in matters of conteſt or contention. As to advice, we ſhould not adviſe one ſuperior to us in authority, dignity or age. He who offers advice, claims a kind of ſuperiority in knowledge over another; which is not conſiſtent with the reverence and reſpect that is due to our betters. Indeed, if they aſk advice, we may without preſumption give it; becauſe they may deſire it in prudent caution, to hear another's ſentiments; but to obtrude it on them is preſumptuous arrogance. Nor ought we with any appearance of ſuperiority, to adviſe our equals; for this would be to exalt ourſelves in wiſdom above him, and imply a contemptuous opinion of his knowledge. If another deſires our advice we muſt not obſtinately preſs or urge it, in caſe it ſhould not be liked. For if we perform the part of a faithful friend, in adviſing another what to us ſeems beſt, this is ſufficient; as to the regarding of it, that is his concern and not ours. To be diſpleaſed becauſe he doth not follow it, is to become his commander, not counſellor; which was what he never intended. No conſiderations except of friendſhip, humanity, or charity, ſhould induce us to accept the office of an adviſer, it being a critical and dangerous undertaking. For if the buſineſs ſucceeds according to our advice, yet the party concerned has generally the praiſe; his judgment, induſtry and ſucceſs are applauded, when little benefit or honour accrues to the adviſer: But ſhould it not proſper, the chief blame is laid on him who gave the advice, ſuppoſing that it would not have ſo happened, had he not directed it. We ſhould therefore adviſe with caution and diffidence. Such

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a modeſt diſcreet method, whatever the event may be, will ſecure us from blame, and advance our reputation for ſagacity and wiſdom. For if our advice fails, our giving it with ſome ſort of doubt will be approved; if it ſucceeds, the goodneſs of our judgment will be applauded.

As for reproof, which is a neceſſary duty on ſome occaſions, it may be proper to obſerve theſe directions. We muſt not reprove a ſuperior, for that is to exerciſe a power over him, which tends to pervert order, and confound the ranks of men; to do this, is irreverent and preſumptuous, injurious and odious. What the miniſters of the goſpel do of this nature is by ſpecial command from God, as the prophets rebuked princes and prieſts; John the baptiſt Herod; or, as being ſet over us to guide and watch our ſouls, for which they muſt render an account. We ſhould not reprove raſhly, or without certain knowledge of the fact; to reprove for things not done, to ſuſpect a man of ill, to blame him on ſlender pretences, or doubtful ſurmiſes, is unjuſt and unfair. Even thoſe who can contentedly bear friendly reproof, like not to be rebuked without juſt cauſe. We ought not to reprove for ſlight matters, for ſuch faults or defects as proceed from natural frailty, inadvertency or miſtake; friendſhip, charity, and humanity ſhould cover ſuch offences. Nor yet ſhould we do it unſeaſonably, when there is no probability of doing good thereby. Profligate perſons will not regard reproof, but hate the reprover. To be derided, or aſperſed with reproach and ſlander, is all we ſhall get by reproving ſuch. Indeed moſt men in ſome ſeaſons are incapable of reproof; as in time of calamity, when their grief ought rather to be mitigated by comfort, than encreaſed and aggravated by blame; and men in a paſſion have no ears to hear, reaſon to judge, or inclinations to comply

ply with advice. At ſuch ſeaſons reproof will ſooner produce anger and ill-blood, than effect amendment? Public reproof alſo is ſeldom proper; by this a man's modeſty and reputation ſuffers. When we reprove, it ſhould be done in a mild calm manner, in gentle terms, not in a haughty, imperious way, with bitter looks or language; for ſuch methods hinder the good effects of reproof, they inflame and diſturb the perſon reproved, create envy and hatred againſt the reprover; nor is it likely to convince a man of his error, or induce him to correct his fault. Such reproofs tend rather to harden than mend men. For if reproof doth not ſavour of humanity, it will never prove effectual. Nothing but a ſenſe of duty, of friendſhip, of charity and good will, ſhould move us to commence a reprover; for to affect reproving is a ſign of ill-nature and arrogance. A good man would gladly be excuſed from the office, and be moſt pleaſed with commending the good deeds and virtues of others.

Another kind of medling is, interpoſing in the conteſts, and contentions of others. As to this, we ſhould never ſo meddle, as to raiſe or breed diſſentions, to create miſunderſtandings or differences between our neighbours, to inſtil jealouſies or ſurmiſes; we ſhould not interpret their words and actions to an ill ſenſe, nor diſcloſe the ſecrets of one to another; ſuch practices produce enmity and ſtrife, and are therefore inhuman and diabolical. We ſhould not foment diſſentions already begun, by blowing up the coals, abetting the ſtrife, or aggravating the cauſes thereof; nor encreaſe the quarrel by ſiding with one party againſt the other; unleſs when one is notoriouſly oppreſſed or abuſed, then indeed we may offer our advice and aſſiſtance. We ſhould not interpoſe without requeſt to be arbitrators of difference; our Saviour waved this office,

office, ſaying, " who made me a divider or a judge " between you?" If we would meddle in theſe caſes, it ſhould be only in endeavouring by the moſt prudent methods to promote peace and reconcile differences; if by exhortation and perſuaſion to peace, by handſomely repreſenting the things ſo as to mitigate their paſſions, and bring them to good terms; this is a laudable meddling, a bleſſed practice. —I ſhall now haſten to propoſe ſome conſiderations, perſuading men to quietneſs, and to refrain from a criminal interfering with the concerns of others. And this may be done to the greateſt advantage, by comparing the nature and benefit of quietneſs, with that of a pragmatic buſy temper.

Quietneſs ſignifies humility, modeſty and ſobriety of mind; that we do not think ourſelves wiſer than our neighbour, allowing to every man his ſhare of diſcretion, to underſtand and manage his own affairs; but pragmaticalneſs or ſelf-conceit ſhews great arrogance, and that we imagine ourſelves the only men of wiſdom, at leaſt wiſer than thoſe with whom we interfere. Quietneſs is beneficial to the world, preſerving the general order of things, keeping men within their proper ſtation, attending to their own work and buſineſs, to the mutual advantage of themſelves and the public; but pragmaticalneſs or a buſy meddling temper, diſturbs the world, deſtroying the diſtinction between ſuperior, inferior and equal, and renders every man's buſineſs uncertain. Quietneſs preſerves concord and amity, for thereby no man is diſturbed or hindered from doing his buſineſs according to his own mind and pleaſure; but a buſy-body breeds diſſentions and differences; by his intermedling he provokes others to quarrel with him, every man being zealous to maintain his own liberty of acting as he likes, and will oppoſe thoſe who attempt to deprive him of that right. Quietneſs is a decent

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pleaſant thing, implying a good temper, and producing happy effects; but a pragmatic buſy-body is ever diſagreeable and odious. Every man would gladly be neighbour to a quiet perſon, who by the calmneſs, ſweetneſs and inoffenſiveneſs of his humour and behaviour, affords all the pleaſure of converſation, without any trouble. But no man would willingly live by him, who is of a turbulent or furious behaviour; who on all occaſions will officiouſly obtrude himſelf, prying into what is done, dictating and adviſing what he thinks proper, and thus uſurping power and juriſdiction over the actions of his neighbour. Quietneſs adorns any profeſſion, bringing credit, reſpect, and love thereto; but to be pragmatical or officious, brings an odium on any party or cauſe. Nothing hath occaſioned more prejudice to religion, or more diſparaged truth, than a boiſterous unſeaſonable zeal. A quiet perſon, tho' miſtaken, is more to be eſteemed, than he that is furiouſly and factiouſly orthodox. The ornament "of a meek and quiet ſpirit, is in God's "ſight of great price," and alſo very eſtimable in the opinion of men. Laſtly, to be quiet is ſafe, as it not only keeps men from needleſs buſineſs, but from being charged with its bad ſucceſs; but pragmaticalneſs is dangerous, for if things go ill, the blame and damage will be imputed to thoſe who meddled in the buſineſs. Men to excuſe themſelves will throw the diſgrace on thoſe who did project or adviſe the undertaking. He therefore that would be ſecure, let him be quiet; he that loves trouble, let him be officious and pragmatical.

We ſhould alſo conſider, that every man hath buſineſs of his own ſufficient to employ him, to exerciſe his mind, to take up his time and leiſure. To ſtudy and mind our own concerns, to provide for the neceſſities and conveniences of life, to regard the intereſts of our ſouls, to be diligent in our buſineſs

buſineſs and calling, to diſcharge faithfully and carefully all our duties to God and man; theſe are what will abundantly employ us. And whoever diligently performs theſe neceſſary duties, will find enough to exerciſe his time, without intermeddling with the affairs of others. It is indeed obſervable, that thoſe who meddle with the concerns of others, are apt to neglect their own; and that they who know others moſt, are leaſt acquainted with themſelves. But ſhould it happen that we want buſineſs of our own, yet we ought not to meddle with the affairs of others; there are many different ways more innocent, ſafe, pleaſant, and advantageous to divert ourſelves, and ſatisfy curioſity. Nature herſelf offers an inexhauſtible fund to our contemplation; we may without any crime, and with much delight, ſurvey her rich varieties; examine her proceedings, enquire into her minuteſt ſecrets; every kind of animals, of plants, of minera's, of meteors, preſents us with matter, innocently, pleaſantly, and profitably to entertain our minds. There are alſo many noble ſciences, by the ſtudying of which we may not only divert ourſelves, but cultivate and improve our own underſtandings. The hiſtories of paſt ages, or what concerns foreign countries, wherein the manners and actions of men are deſcribed and reported, may afford us uſeful pleaſure; we may thereby learn and know as much of the world, as by the moſt curious enquiry into the preſent actions of men; there we may obſerve, reflect on, and cenſure the proceeding of whom we pleaſe, without danger or offence. We have alſo numberleſs books, wherein the wiſeſt and moſt ingenious of men have laid open their hearts, and expoſed their moſt ſecret thoughts; in peruſing them, we may innocently buſy ourſelves and gratefully paſs our idle hours. We may meddle with ourſelves, ſtudy our own diſpoſitions,

poſitions, examine our own principles and intentions, reflect on our own thoughts, words and actions, and thoroughly ſtrive to know ourſelves. To intermeddle in ſuch things we have an unqueſtionable right, and by it ſhall obtain much greater beneſit, than we can hope to gain by interfering with the buſineſs, deſigns and actions of others. So that pragmaticalneſs or being buſily officious, is very dangerous and troubleſome, alſo perfectly needleſs. It is a ſort of idleneſs the worſt and moſt unreaſonable of any. It was the ſaying of St. Gregory Nazianzen, that he would rather be idle more than he ſhould be, than be over-buſy. Tho' other conſiderations might be added, yet I hope theſe will be ſufficient, to reſtrain us from a practice, that is ſo unreaſonable and unprofitable to ourſelves, ſo injurious and troubleſome to others.

Diſcourſe LXXXI. Dr. *Clarke.*

Of HUMILITY, and the SIN of PRIDE.

Luke xiv. 11.

For whoſoever exalteth himſelf ſhall be abaſed; and he that humbleth himſelf ſhall be exalted.

HUMILITY is a virtue of the greateſt uſe in life, and yet very difficult to be truly practiſed, or rightly ſtated. True humility conſiſts, not in mens appearing to think amiſs of themſelves, but in a modeſt prudent behaviour; not in aſſuming a character above their ſtation, but by the practice of real and uſeful virtues. This is the behaviour of true merit; the method which tends to bring men to real honour, and an eſtabliſhed eſteem. In order to explain more diſtinctly what true humility is, regard muſt be had to the perſons towards whom it is to be exerciſed, and to the things wherein ſuch perſons differ. The virtue of humility is to be expreſſed either to ſuperiors, equals, or inferiors; and the things in which ſuch do principally differ, are either their civil ſtations, their natural abilities, or religious improvements. As to ſuperiors in general, true humility conſiſts in readily ſubmitting to their authority, and paying them all due honour and reſpect in things juſt and lawful; in not deſpiſing their perſons, nor expoſing their weakneſſes, or infirmities; but making all reaſonable allowances for the difficulties attending their high ſtations, and the temptations to which they are liable. It alſo conſiſts, not in blindly and implicitly

plicity ſubmitting our underſtanding to theirs, but in being willing and deſirous to be inſtructed and informed by them. With regard to ſuperiors in religious improvements, humility conſiſts in rejoicing to ſee the practice of virtue, and the advancement of God's kingdom to encreaſe upon earth.

True humility towards our equals conſiſts, in a civil, affable and courteous behaviour; in patiently permitting our equals to be preferred before us, and modeſtly deſiring that thoſe who are upon a level with us, may have rather a greater than leſs reſpect; in being "kindly affectioned one towards "another, with brotherly love, in honour preferring "one another." For whoſoever exalteth himſelf ſhall be abaſed, and he that humbleth himſelf ſhall be exalted. It further conſiſts, in willingly ſubmitting for peace ſake, to many things we may not otherwiſe chuſe or like. As men have different judgments and inclinations, gifts and talents from God, given to every one as he pleaſes, therefore to prevent confuſion, the duty of humility requires, that we ſhould be ready to ſubmit to each other, with all meekneſs, patience, and good-will; "for-"bearing and forgiving one another, and ſubmitting "ourſelves one to another, in the fear of God."

True humility with regard to our inferiors conſiſts, in aſſuming to ourſelves no more than the difference of mens circumſtances, and the performance of their reſpective duties, neceſſarily requires. In civil ſtations, the humility of a governor conſiſts, not in making his authority deſpicable and ſubject to contempt, but to exerciſe it as a truſt committed to him for the benefit of others; and not out of love to power and dominion. He commands without inſulting, reproves with meekneſs, puniſhes unwillingly, and never without pity and compaſſion; with regard to the natural or acquired abilities of others. humility conſiſts in not deſpiſing and contemning

temning thoſe, whoſe talents are inferior to ours, but in conſidering that they may have ſome gifts, which we want; and in being willing to communicate to them the advantages we enjoy, that they may be better for what God has bleſſed us with. The humility of a rich man conſiſts, not in levelling himſelf with the poor, and confounding the diſtinctions which God and nature have eſtabliſhed among men; but in endeavouring to make the condition of the meaneſt eaſy and ſupportable, by our being ready to aſſiſt and relieve their neceſſities. The true humility of perſons abounding in knowledge and learning, does not conſiſt in an affected ignorance, but in being ready to communicate what they know, that others may with them encreaſe in knowledge. Laſtly, true humility towards our inferiors in reſpect of religious improvements, conſiſts in being rightly ſenſible of our own infirmities, and ſincerely ſolicitous for the welfare and ſalvation of all men; in endeavouring to influence men towards religion, by meekneſs rather than power; in not affecting to gain the empty applauſe of men, by boaſting of greater piety than others, like the Phariſees, who do all their works to be ſeen of men; in condeſcending to thoſe beneath us, and yielding to them in things indifferent; in bearing the infirmities of the weak, and not to pleaſe ourſelves, but to pleaſe our neighbour for his good, even as Chriſt pleaſed not himſelf; in not judging or deſpiſing thoſe who differ from us in opinion; "for let not him that eateth deſpiſe him that eateth "not; nor him that eateth not, judge him that eat-"eth;" in taking care ſo to behave, that by our meekneſs, others may be prevailed on to believe in Chriſt, and alſo to avoid all diviſions; in not impoſing needleſs difficulties upon thoſe under our power, like the Phariſees, who bind very heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on mens ſhoulders,

but they themſelves, will not move them with one of their fingers. Laſtly, it conſiſts in uſing great gentleneſs even to thoſe that have offended; "brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which "are ſpiritual, reſtore ſuch an one in the ſpirit "of meekneſs, conſidering thyſelf, leſt thou alſo "be tempted."

Indeed, there are no caſes, wherein the practice of humility, is more intricate, or difficult, than when men are tempted to ſpiritual pride, or deſpiſe thoſe who are inferior to them in religious improvements. This is a vice that will inſinuate itſelf into men upon many occaſions; and to mention ſome inſtances thereof may be of uſe. And there is a ſpiritual pride in preſuming to ſin, becauſe of other virtues we are endued with. This was the caſe of Uzziah, and Hezekiah, who had done "what was right in the ſight of the Lord, and had "ſerved him diligently," and yet at laſt their hearts were lifted up to their own deſtruction. And even St. Paul ſays, "leſt I ſhould be exalted above "meaſure, thro' the abundance of the revelations, "there was given to me a thorn in the fleſh, an "affliction, the meſſenger of Satan to buffet "me."

The duty of humility in this caſe conſiſts in being ſenſible of our frailty and danger, in working out "our ſalvation with fear and trembling; and taking "heed leſt we fall, even when we think we ſtand "ſureſt." There is alſo a ſpiritual pride of vain glory in affecting to make public ſuch actions of ours, as are good and commendable; thus the Phariſees, when "they gave their alms ſounded a trumpet before "them, and when they prayed, did it in the ſynagogues and in the ſtreets, that they might be ſeen and "have glory of men." In oppoſition to this, true humility conſiſts in ſo diſpoſing our alms, as not to let our left hand know, what our right hand does; and

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in avoiding all affectation and public boaſting of our private virtues. Again, there is another ſpiritual pride of men, when they confidently juſtify themſelves, and are wholly inſenſible of their own failings, while they are very cenſorious, in judging and deſpiſing others; as we read of the Phariſee who prayed thus with himſelf; "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjuſt, adulterers, or even as this Publican: I faſt twice in the week, I give tythes of all I poſſeſs. And the Publican ſtanding afar off, would not lift up ſo much as his eyes to heaven, but ſmote upon his breaſt, ſaying God, be merciful to me a ſinner. And this man, ſays our Saviour, went down to his houſe juſtified, rather than the other; for every one that exalteth himſelf ſhall be abaſed, and he that humbleth himſelf ſhall be exalted." The humility oppoſite to this ſort of pride, is that of Job; "If I juſtify myſelf, my own mouth ſhall "condemn me; if I ſay, I am perfect, it ſhall alſo "prove me perverſe;—Wherefore I abhor myſelf, "and repent in duſt and aſhes." Good men, tho' they ſhould not ſpeak or think ill of themſelves, if they are innocent; yet, when they conſider the infinite purity of God, and the perfection of his law, they ſhould then humble themſelves, in a deep ſenſe of their own many follies and imperfections.

There is a further degree of ſpiritual pride, in pretending to merit at the hands of God; which is what the church of Rome preſumptuouſly aſſumes to themſelves. In oppoſition to this ſort of pride, humility conſiſts, in that diſpoſition of mind, which is recorded of the good centurion, "Lord, I "am not worthy," I have no pretence to expect "that thou ſhouldſt come under my roof;—but "ſpeak the word, and my ſervant ſhall be healed." And St. Paul, "unto me, who am leſs than the

" leaſt of all ſaints, is this grace given." For when we have done all that we are commanded, we are unprofitable ſervants; we have done only that which was our duty to do. But there is yet a higher degree of this ſpiritual pride, in pretending to works of ſupererogation, which the church of Rome alſo lays claim to. This ſeems to have been the fault of the young man in the goſpel, who when our Saviour ſaid to him, " if thou wilt " enter into life, keep the commandments," replied, " what lack I yet?" But true humility, in oppoſition to this falſe and proud appearance of it, conſiſts in making not our own will, but God's, the rule of our duty; " caſting down imaginations and " every high thing that exalteth itſelf, againſt the " knowledge of God; and bringing into captivity " every thought, to the obedience, not of men, but " of Chriſt." Laſtly, there is a ſpiritual pride, in being fond of myſteries and ſecret things, to the neglect of our plain and manifeſt duty. In oppoſition to this, true humility is what the wiſe man deſcribes, " be not wiſe in thine own eyes, fear the " Lord, and depart from evil. Secret things be- " long unto the Lord our God; but thoſe things " which are revealed, belong unto us, and to our " children forever, that we may do all the words of " the law." Having thus ſhewn what true humility is, and wherein it conſiſts, I ſhall proceed to offer ſome arguments to perſuade men to the practice of this duty. And the beſt way of doing this, will be to repreſent the natural ill conſequences of pride; and the advantages ariſing from true humility.

Pride makes men fooliſh and void of caution, negligent and improvident of the future, which often throws men into ſudden calamities. " When pride " cometh, then cometh ſhame; but with the lowly " is wiſdom." It makes men raſh and peeviſh, obſtinate and inſolent, which generally brings ruin upon

upon them. "Pri e goeth before deſtruction, and "an haughty ſpirit, before a fall." It involves men in ſtrifes and contentions, and thoſe are inconſiſtent with true happineſs. It diſobliges mens beſt friends, and gives their enemies an advantage over them. It makes men impatient of good advice and inſtruction, which renders them incorrigible in their vices. "Seeſt thou a man wiſe in his "own conceit, there is more hope of a fool than "of him." Pride hinders men from examining impartially into the truth of religion, and makes them incapable of religious improvements; it cauſes men to take offence at the plainneſs and ſimplicity of the goſpel, and thereby prevents it from making due impreſſions upon them. Theſe are ſome of the natural ill conſequences of pride, and which clearly diſcover to us the advantages ariſing from true humility. Again,

As pride is naturally attended with many ill conſequences, ſo is it in particular very hateful to God. He by the prophet declares, that "the lofty "looks of man ſhall be humbled, and the haughti-"neſs of men ſhall be bowed down; for the day of "the Lord of hoſts ſhall be upon every one that is "proud and lofty, and upon every one that is "lifted up; and he ſhall be brought low." "Be "cloathed with humility; for God reſiſteth the "proud, and giveth grace unto the humble." And in the words of the text, "whoſoever exalteth him-"ſelf ſhall be abaſed; and he that humbleth himſelf "ſhall be exalted." The reaſon why pride is thus hateful to God, is, becauſe it uſually ſignifies and includes a preſumptuous attempt to tranſgreſs inſolently, and with an high hand, which is the greateſt aggravation of ſin, and moſt directly oppoſite to that meek and humble ſpirit, which ſtudies God's will, and is alſo fearful of diſobeying it. Woe unto them that are wiſe in their own eyes,

and prudent in their own ſight; who ſay, we will walk after our own devices, and will every one do the imagination of his evil heart. And who ſay unto God, depart from us, for we deſire not the knowledge of thy ways; what is the almighty, that we ſhould ſerve him? and what profit ſhould we have, if we pray unto him? It is generally ſuppoſed, that the original ſin of the devil was pride; and which may not be improbable, if we mean thereby, the devil's preſuming upon the greatneſs and dignity of his nature, inſolently to tranſgreſs ſome of the divine commands; and the words of the prophet ſeem to allude to the fall of Satan. How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, ſon of the morning! For thou haſt ſaid in thine heart, I will aſcend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the ſtars of God, I will aſcend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the moſt high. Yet thou ſhalt be brought down into hell, to the ſides of the pit. And they that ſee thee ſhall ſay, is this the man that made the earth to tremble? The conſideration therefore that pride is hateful to God, is a ſtrong argument to deter men from it.

Another motive to recommend the practice of humility, is the example of our bleſſed Saviour, who tho' he was Lord of all, yet he was content not to have where to lay his head: Who tho' he was rich, yet for our ſakes became poor, that we thro' his poverty might be rich: Who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he ſuffered, he threatned not, but committed himſelf to him who judgeth righteouſly: which example of univerſal humility in all circumſtances, he propoſes to our imitation; learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart. Theſe are ſome of the principal arguments to perſuade men to the practice of humility in general. And there are in particular as many

many diſtinct motives to practiſe this duty, as there are different circumſtances and varieties of caſes, wherein to exercise it. For without practiſing it towards ſuperiors, there can be no government; without expreſſing it to our equals, there can be no friendſhip and mutual charity. And with regard to inferiors, beſides the example of Chriſt's unſpeakable condeſcention towards us all, there are many proper arguments to deter us from pride, either on account of our civil ſtations, our natural abilities, or our religious improvements.

If our civil ſtations tempt us to a proud haughty behaviour, we ſhould conſider, that God accepteth not the perſon of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor; for they are all the work of his hands. Let us alſo think upon the vanity and uncertainty of thoſe things which ſo puff us up; that all fleſh is graſs, and all the glory of man as the flower of graſs; the graſs withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away. Let the rich rejoice, in that he is made low; becauſe, as the flower of the graſs he ſhall paſs away. Let us likewiſe conſider, that if we are placed in high ſtations, we have a larger account to give to God; and that it will not be long before death and judgment will level all worldly diſtinctions; when the greateſt wicked men will ſay, what hath pride profited us? Or, what hath riches with her vaunting brought us? All theſe things are paſt away as a ſhadow, and as a poſt that haſteth by. And if we are lifted up with our learning, wiſdom, or the like, it may humble us to conſider how ſmall a degree of theſe things we can attain to? And if it was poſſible to attain much more, yet there is ſomething far more excellent; for knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth; and if any man think he knoweth, any thing he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. Wherefore, thus ſaith the Lord,

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Let not the wiſe man glory in his wiſdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he underſtandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, which exerciſe loving kindneſs, judgment, and righteouſneſs in the earth; for in theſe things I delight, ſaith the Lord.

If any advantages in religious improvements tempt us to ſpiritual pride and vain-glory, to judge or deſpiſe our weaker brethren; let us conſider, that all the members of Chriſt are uſeful in their ſeveral ſtations; that how great ſoever our abilities or advantages may be, yet that we are not even by the means of theſe "ſufficient of ourſelves, to think any thing as of ourſelves, but our ſufficiency is of God;" for what have we, that we did not receive from God's free bounty and goodneſs. Let us further conſider, in order to abate our ſpiritual pride and contempt of our weaker brethren, who differ from us in matter of opinion; that there is a day coming, which will diſtinguiſh men by their works of piety and true holineſs only; when mens fooliſh pride and arrogance ſhall be entirely confounded, and thoſe who with ſcorn beheld others as infinitely below them, ſhall be placed upon an equal foot with them they deſpiſed. That how great ſoever our improvements be, even in real virtue and goodneſs, yet we have continual reaſon to take heed leſt we fall: That while we ſtand the moſt upright, we have nothing to glory of before God. For can a man be juſtified with God? That the greateſt and moſt eminently pious men have been exemplarily humble in this reſpect. Holy Job refuſed to juſtify himſelf before God; Abraham ſtiled himſelf duſt and aſhes; Jacob acknowledges that he is leſs than the leaſt of God's mercies; St. Paul calls himſelf the leaſt of all ſaints; having been a perſecutor of the church of God.——Again, Humility is the only

only means to entitle us to the divine aſſiſtance, and is the beſt help to our rightly underſtanding matters of religion. Truſt in the Lord, ſays Solomon, with all thine heart, and lean not to thy own underſtanding; in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he ſhall direct thy paths: be not wiſe in thine own eyes, fear the Lord and depart from evil. The meek that are meek will God guide in judgment; and ſuch as are gentle, them will he learn his way. For God reſiſteth the proud, and giveth grace unto the humble.

The reaſon why God reſiſts the former, and encourages the latter, is, becauſe "every one that is "proud in heart, is an abomination to the Lord." And he muſt needs be ſo, as being an enemy to truth, God's eſſential attribute and perfection; in the maintenance of which among all rational creatures, his glory conſiſts. Now pride is a direct violation of truth, for its foundation is laid in falſhood. The proud man thinks himſelf to be what he is not, and takes all poſſible pains to rivet the lye in his own breaſt. He magnifies every good quality, and winks at every bad one, hereby forming an imaginary character, that no way belongs to him. His actions, his profeſſions, his demeanor in general, are a continuation of falſhood, and a ſcene of fraud. He aſſumes ſuch honours and reſpects, as he has no right to. In ſhort, he acts in life a fictitious part; deludes whom he can, and is in the ſight of God, an impoſtor. And ſince it was God's will, to ordain that there ſhould be different natural powers and perfections, ranks, ſtations and conditions of life among men, to anſwer the ends of order and regularity; ſo to oppoſe, break in upon, obſtruct or interfere with this divine and beneficial regulation and order, cannot but be highly offenſive to the great governor of the world; who appointed it from the beginning. And all in-

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vaſions of, or oppoſitions to it, may be conſidered as acts of direct rebellion againſt heaven. And is not this manifeſtly the caſe of pride, diſcontent, envy and ambition, thoſe darling vices of Lucifer? Did they not, from a glorious angel of light, transform him to a devil? was it any wonder then that God ſhould reſiſt his pride, and confound his ambition, which prompted him to rebel againſt the moſt High, and withſtand his moſt righteous decrees? That the Almighty ſhould puniſh the ſtout heart of this grand apoſtate, and bring down the glory of his high looks? The ſame crime in man is in proportion equally odious and impious; and therefore incurs and will receive a ſuitable diſpleaſure and puniſhment. Nay, in ſome reſpects it is attended with a peculiar aggravation.

Pride was not made for man. That is, he has ſo many blots in his character, ſo many infirmities to acknowledge, ſo many ſins and follies to anſwer for; that it may ſeem ſtrange, how pride could ever ſteal into his heart, or even enter into his thoughts. If angels might be dazzled by the luſtre of their own perfections, yet ſurely this is not man's caſe. Can pride kindle in corruption? or a flame of ambition break out of ſinful duſt and aſhes? We indeed aſpire to great things, glory in our ſtrength and worth, who are a-kin to the very worms, and deſtined for their prey. But can ſo low, ſo humble a condition, be a proper ſoil for pride and vanity, arrogance and ambition?—Since then the proud man violates the order of the creation, diſturbs the harmony of the world, and reſiſts the appointments of heaven; it naturally follows, in truth and righteouſneſs, that God will reſiſt, and in time effectually humble him.

On the other hand, the reaſon is no leſs manifeſt why he ſhould give grace to the humble, in whatever ſenſe the expreſſion may be underſtood. If it means

means God's general favour and encouragement, and the bleſſings thence arising, the taſte an admit of no doubt. For what is a more proper object of his favour, or more amiable and excellent than humility? Humility and charity ever ſhine with a peculiar luſtre, and are eminently precious in the ſight of God. If any graces of the ſoul of man are fit to be tranſplanted into the regions above, it muſt be theſe, which will there find a place, and forever flouriſh in perpetual bloom. Humility muſt be ever a proper object of divine regard; as being eſſential to the heavenly ſtate, and moſt lovely in itſelf. Amidſt the numberleſs orders and degrees of the bleſſed, what enjoyment could there be, for the proud, envious, and ambitious; ſuppoſing it poſſible for them to be admitted? Their reſtleſs minds would extract miſery out of joy, and turn concord into confuſion. But no difference of condition, no higher advantages, or ſuperior glories, will ever diſturb the humble-minded, or diminiſh their happineſs. Perfectly ſatisfied with their own bliſs, they will behold thoſe above them without regret, and view all the bleſſed with perfect complacency. For in that day, they will be glorioufly diſtinguiſhed and exalted. Their humility ſhall be crowned with honour, and their ſelf-abaſement lift them up. God will abundantly and in the moſt conſpicuous manner diſplay his favour and eſteem for them. In a word, they will receive that preeminence they never ſought, and be publickly glorified, in the ſight of men and angels.

But if by God's giving grace to the humble, be underſtood the aid and aſſiſtances of his holy ſpirit, conferred on ſuch in a larger meaſure; this is alſo a fact eaſy to be accounted for. As humility in a peculiar manner renders the mind ſuſceptible of the beſt impreſſions, and naturally qualifies it for virtuous improvements; ſo it more eſpecially entitles

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it to the ſuccours of heaven, and the influences of divine grace. It is on many accounts beſt fitted for the reſidence and habitation of God's holy ſpirit; which delights to "dwell with him that is of a "contrite and humble ſpirit." Upon the whole then it is very evident, that humility is a moſt powerful recommendation to God's favour, who is ever beſt pleaſed with what moſt conduces to the perfections of his creatures, and the general benefit of mankind. And certain it is, that nothing tends more, either to the peace and proſperity of the public, or the happineſs of individuals; nothing is more favourable and friendly to ſociety, to the order and good government of the world. Strong is the biaſs of ſelf-love, and very powerful are all its affections. To govern and keep theſe within the bounds of reaſon and truth, is a conqueſt glorious in itſelf, productive of the greateſt benefits to mankind, and muſt needs be a ſacrifice highly well pleaſing in the ſight of God. I conclude in the words of our bleſſed Lord, the greateſt patron, and nobleſt pattern of humility that ever lived; "Bleſ-"ſed are the poor in ſpirit, for he who humbleth "himſelf as a little child, the ſame ſhall be great-"eſt in the kingdom of heaven."

Diſcourſe LXXXII. Bp. *Hickman.*

On the PASSIONS, and how to GOVERN them.

Acts xxiv. 15.

We alſo are men of like paſſions with you.

THE great buſineſs of religion is to mortify our luſts by the help of grace, and ſubdue our paſſions, thoſe infirmities of our nature, and bring them into ſubjection to the Holy Spirit, whoſe fruits are "love, joy, long-ſuffering, gentleneſs, "goodneſs, meekneſs, temperance;" and yet after all the advances we can make in virtue, the beſt proficients in grace may ſay with the diſciples of nature, "we alſo are men of like paſſions with "you."—Theſe words were ſpoken by Paul and Barnabas to the men of Lycaonia, to convince them they were not Gods, and to reſtrain the people from offering ſacrifices to them; a very modeſt, true and ingenuous confeſſion.

And yet perhaps it may ſeem ſtrange, that an apoſtle, renewed by the Holy Ghoſt, and endued with all the graces of the goſpel, ſhould make ſuch an open profeſſion of his paſſions, to the great diſparagement of thoſe other gifts. For as paſſion is a violent aſſault upon our reaſon, a turbulent motion in our hearts, if this muſt ſtill take place, in ſpite of all the aſſiſtances of the ſpirit, where is that meekneſs, gentleneſs, and temperance, which are the ornaments and eſſentials of a Chriſtian life? But

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ſo it is, that the beſt of men are ſubject to paſſions and infirmities; this is a truth which all good men are not aſhamed to confeſs, and none but bad men will deny.

Indeed when we come to heaven, we ſhall ſhake off theſe diſtempers of our nature, and our ſouls will be purified and refined; but whilſt we are in the body, they are too deeply rooted in our ſenſes, for either our religion or reaſon to extirpate. Moſes, the meekeſt of men, ſlew an Egyptian in his anger; David the devouteſt of men, was in his devotion tranſported with anger; our Saviour, the moſt patient of men, was once overwhelmed with ſorrow: and even the apoſtles tell the Heathens, that they were men of like paſſions with them; by which it appears that religion was deſigned only to improve, and not extinguiſh nature. It was this very point that raiſed a controverſy between two famed ſects of antient philoſophers; the one was for governing and keeping under the paſſions of man; and their deſign was good: The other required, that they ſhould be totally aboliſhed and extirpated; but this was impracticable. They were not contented with the nature God had given them, but were for new making man after an image of their own. By this great miſtake, they rendered their lives uncomfortable, and their doctrines diſagreeable; and by their philoſophy proved, that nature may be managed, but cannot be forced. And yet was it poſſible for a man to force his nature, and diveſt himſelf of paſſion, it is a queſtion whether this be deſirable; ſince our ſouls would be very flat and inſipid without them. Our reaſon would be too weak to ſupport our virtue, and man would at beſt be a heavy unactive creature, without our paſſions to encourage and excite us to good works.

But to this a ſtoick may object, that our paſſions incline us to evil as well as good, which betray us into

into ſin and danger, and therefore ought to be rooted out. Indeed, it muſt be owned, that all our ſins proceed from ſome miſguided paſſion; but God made us ſubject to thoſe paſſions for the exerciſe of our religion, that by a right management of ourſelves, between our vicious inclinations to chuſe the evil, and our religious endeavours to purſue the good, we might try our obedience, and recommend our virtue. Did we lie under a natural neceſſity of doing good, what honour would our good works bring to God? And if we had no temptation to evil, what praiſe would the avoiding it bring to ourſelves? The difficulty and danger of the enterprize is what makes it honourable; for without oppoſition, there can be no conqueſt. But it may be ſaid, that our paſſions make us more liable to evil, than to good; and more likely to be conquered, than to conquer. And yet this is no argument, for our paſſions to be rooted out, ſince we find it recorded in ſcripture, that the beſt men have been ſubject to the greateſt failings, the ſenſe of which has made them the greater ſaints. No man was more exemplary in his virtue than David, and none more notorious in his vice. No man more glorious in his undertakings than St. Peter, and none more ſhameful in his falls. And as the excellencies of theſe men have done more honour to God, and ſervice to the church, than their failings; therefore we ought not to extripate our paſſions, and ſo deſtroy the good and evil together.

To this may be objected that we deſerve to be puniſhed for the evil, but not to be rewarded for the good; and as our paſſions occaſion both, were they diſcarded it would be better for us. To which I anſwer, that God in the judgment which he paſſes on men, will no doubt make allowance for their different conſtitutions. He knows whereof we are made and that every man's conſtitution inclines him

ſtrongly to ſome one paſſion or other. And if we think that he expects the ſame from all perſons, this would be to make him act arbitrarily by us, and not according to our ability. For inſtance, the ſcripture does not tell us, that God expects the ſame temper of mind, the ſame evenneſs and ſteadineſs of temper, from a ſanguine man, as he does from the cold and phlegmatic; or, that he requires the ſame fervent zeal, and ardour of devotion, from the phlegmatic, as he does from the warm and ſanguine. Tho' both are obliged to ſtruggle with their infirmities, yet nature will be nature ſtill, and fall we ſhall ſometimes. And we cannot but admire the excellency of the goſpel above all other religions, for being ſo exactly calculated to the nature and abilities of men; requiring nothing of us, as neceſſary to ſalvation, but what we are able to perform. It gives us the beſt encouragement to be virtuous, and yet does not condemn us for every vice; it ſhews the true way to ſubdue our paſſions, and then offers us a pardon for thoſe we could not overcome.

Indeed our Saviour's coming upon earth and dying for us, plainly intimates, that there are vicious principles within us, which cannot be ſubdued; for had we not lain under a moral impoſſibility of avoiding ſin, we needed not ſo extraordinary a redemption. And after the goſpel was preached on earth, how many frailties of the apoſtles do we find recorded? Frailties of men inſpired by the Holy Ghoſt; frailties of thoſe very men, who are propoſed to us as moſt eminent examples of piety and religion. How many frailties has St. Peter recorded of himſelf, in St. Mark's goſpel? How many more do we read, of him and his brethren, in the acts of the apoſtles? How hot was the conteſt between him and St. Paul, who withſtood him to the face? How ſharp was the diſpute between St. Paul

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and Barnabas? In my text, we find them both promoting the honour of God like friends, and modeſtly declaring, they were ſubject to paſſions like other men; which they ſoon after verified, being ſo angry with each other, that they parted. And why do theſe things ſtand upon perpetual record in God's book, by the direction of the Holy Spirit, but for our notice; and to inform us, that there is nothing perfect upon earth; that they who have the moſt grace, will ſtill retain a taint of their nature; that tho' our virtue be ever ſo ſtrongly guarded, yet ſome paſſion or other will frequently creep in.

From hence we may learn, not to caſt off our truſt in God, nor yet be diſcouraged from performing the duties of religion, tho' our paſſions ſhould ſometimes break in upon us; for this they did on the apoſtles themſelves. And if we could be but men of like virtues, we need not be uneaſy that we are of like paſſions with them. We are alſo to take care that we do not condemn other men for paſſions, tho' they are not the ſame to which we are ſubject. For we are men of like paſſions with them, if not the ſame; and ought to judge favourably of their failings, as we hope God will of ours.

Another inſtruction we may learn from theſe words, is, that it is not for the reputation of our religion, to diſſemble or deny thoſe paſſions we are poſſeſſed of, tho' we could thereby gain honour to ourſelves. The apoſtles Paul and Barnabas, having wrought a miraculous cure upon an impotent man at Lyſtra, the people concluded they were Gods, and were preparing ſacrifices for them. Had the apoſtles been ambitiouſly inclined, they had a fair opportunity to be deified. But they not only modeſtly and zealouſly diſclaimed the title of God, but proclaimed their own failings; "we alſo "are men of like paſſions with yourſelves." Hence may thoſe who affect to be eſteemed godly men,

without ſin or paſſion receive very proper inſtruction; they may here learn, that virtue and humility, modeſty and piety, muſt always go together. Certainly there is no ſin ſo odious as hypocriſy; no paſſion ſo dangerous, as when concealed. And yet was the diſhonour, danger, and diſgrace of hypocriſy only to ourſelves, it would not be ſo criminal. But it reflects upon religion alſo, and makes it deſpicable in the ſight of men, by which God is diſhonoured.

We are too apt to be puffed up with pride; God has therefore inſtituted a holy religion, on purpoſe to humble us, to ſhew us the vileneſs of our nature, to convince us of the malignity of our ſins, that we may give God the glory, and take ſhame unto ourſelves.

Our paſſions are a demonſtration that we are men. For which reaſon God has inſeparably annexed them to our nature, and made them a neceſſary condition of our mortality; and there is no living in this world without them. A religion that does open violence to our nature, can never gain credit in the world, or be thought to come from God, who gave us life and being. To bid a man throw off all his paſſions, never to be angry, or ſorry, or afraid, is a command that never came from God. Indeed, he has given us ſome reſtraining precepts, as not to "be angry unto ſin; not to be "ſorrowful as men without hope; not to be afraid "where no fear is." But abſolutely to renounce theſe paſſions, is more than God commands, becauſe it is more than man can do; nay, more than our Saviour did. In truth, whoever pretends to be void of paſſion, muſt be either more, or leſs than man. But for us, who are really ſubject to paſſions, to conceal them, that we may be thought like Gods, is the only way to make us proud and arrogant, crafty and malicious. The ſum of all is this;

this; God has put paſſions into our nature, for ſeveral uſeful ends; but as the beſt things in nature are liable to be abuſed, ſo are our paſſions. We muſt therefore endeavour to correct and keep them under; but to extirpate them is impoſſible, and to conceal them dangerous.

Having thus ſeen that our paſſions cannot be rooted out, and ought not to be diſguiſed, we are next to conſider, how they may be ſo managed, as to be ſerviceable to religion. And if we would have our paſſions uſeful to us, we muſt take care, that they be well regulated, ſubdued, and governed; or otherwiſe they will be of no ſervice to us. And the beſt way to do this, will be ſeriouſly to reflect on the paſſions we are guilty of, and conſider the many inconveniences, which the exceſs of them expoſe us to. How uneaſy and vexatious they are to ourſelves, how reproachful and hateful to others! how they debar us from the uſe of our reaſon, ſilence all the precepts of religion, run us headlong upon all kind of dangers, and ſo furiouſly aſſault us, as ſcarce to leave us the command of our ſenſes! Surely this is enough to make us afraid and aſhamed of being blindly or madly led by them. And yet they are generally raiſed about trifles, or meer bubbles; it is theſe we purſue with ſo much eagerneſs and affection. And is it not ſurprizing, to ſee a man reſtleſs and fretful, impatient and clamorous, for ſuch trifling things; to be almoſt as zealouſly ſolicitous, and as really concerned for them, as if his life was at ſtake? Nay, were they of much greater value, it cannot excuſe us, for ſo vehement a purſuit, ſo hot a contention. Tho' it be the honour of God, and the intereſt of religion, that we are contending for, yet even here, by an imprudent management of our paſſions, we may prejudice a good cauſe. For certainly, without moderation, we neither do honour to

God, nor ſervice to religion. A zeal for truth muſt be expreſſed, by ſuch paſſion, as is conſiſtent with meekneſs, gentleneſs and peace. In a word, whatever the occaſion be, we muſt never ſuffer the paſſion to overpower our reaſon, but our buſineſs is, ſo to temper and manage it, as to keep it under. And when our paſſions are thus ſubdued, they are fit to be employed in the ſervice of God, and may be uſeful to us in the exerciſes of religion: which brings me to conſider, how our paſſions ſhould be employed.

The paſſions of men are a ſort of evil ſpirit within us, that is too eaſily raiſed, and may do much hurt, if we do not find them ſome proper objects to work upon; and theſe are no where to be had, but in religion. Here our paſſions may be of excellent uſe; either to promote our virtue, or encreaſe our devotion. Certain it is, that when our paſſions are well regulated and reformed, they are great aſſiſtances and encouragments to virtue. Our reaſon is a cold heavy principle, that ſlowly moves us to our work; but paſſion puts an eagerneſs into our deſires, warmth into our proſecutions, and makes buſineſs go chearfully and vigorouſly on. Whenever therefore we find ourſelves paſſionately engaged in the purſuit of our temporal affairs, in the advancing of our wealth, or promoting our pleaſure; let us conſider, how much greater work we have to do, and turn our heat and zeal that way, and then we ſhall have cauſe to thank God, for giving us theſe paſſions to aſſiſt us.

Our reaſon has little to do, in forming our minds, and bringing us to a virtuous, religious life; but it is our paſſions and affections muſt do this; for till they begin to move, our reaſon is like a chariot without wheels, that can never perform the journey. Our reaſon has not much to learn,

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and is eaſily taught; only our paſſions are obſtinate, our affections perverſe, and our wills crooked, ſo that we find it harder to be perſuaded, than informed. But when once we have got our paſſions at command, all obſtacles are removed, the difficulty of our work is over, and then there is no virtue, that we may not with eaſe attain.

As our virtue, ſo our devotion is much indebted to our paſſions; for a true religious zeal towards God, is only the kind workings of a pious and warm affection. There are in religion ſuch ſubſtantial motives to piety, as are enough to make every man devout. As a paſſionate man's zeal is the ſooneſt kindled, ſo the ſame warmth of conſtitution, that inclines him to be intemperate, may, if well managed, excite him to be devout; and therefore we have no reaſon to be aſhamed or afraid of thoſe paſſions which God has implanted in our nature; ſince we find by pleaſing experience, that they may become the moſt excellent means of grace. They may, if we rightly manage them, prove encouragements to our virtue, and helps to our devotion; they may tend to promote our meekneſs, gentleneſs, goodneſs, and all the fruits of the ſpirit. What has been ſaid of our paſſions in general, I will now illuſtrate by a few particulars. And, Firſt,

With reſpect to anger. This paſſion bears an ill name, and is frequently a troubleſome companion, by engaging us in quarrels and diſputes, ſo that one would think, we might be better without it. And yet even this paſſion may be made of excellent uſe to us, not only by ſecuring our perſons from ſuch indignities, as may be unreaſonably offered us; but as a guard and centinel to out virtue. It may caution us not to be ſurpriſed by vice, nor tempted to approve of thoſe things which are pernicious to us. Nay, ſometimes our anger turns

upon ourſelves, and grows warm againſt our boſom ſin; ſo that by the help of this paſſion, we may caſt an evil ſpirit, when our reaſon alone could not effect it. What has been ſaid of anger, may in part be applied to hatred, diſdain, and pride; paſſions which occaſion much evil, and yet by prudent management, may be turned to a religious uſe, and do as much ſervice. But envy, malice, and detraction can be of no good uſe; they being pure vice, without any mixture of virtue.

Another troubleſome companion to man is fear; a treacherous paſſion appointed to give us fair warning of dangers, and yet it often needleſsly diſturbs us by falſe alarms, and repreſenting dangers nearer and greater than they really are. It awakens our jealouſy, increaſes our apprehenſions, and anticipates our pain, ſo that one might almoſt think it might be well ſpared. And yet would we but ſet this paſſion right, and apply it to its proper object, there is not a more noble, a more uſeful principle in our nature. A Heathen poet ſaid it was the foundation of all religion. The divine pſalmiſt ſays, it is "the beginning of wiſdom." And thoſe men whoſe conſtitution inclines them to be fearful, have a great advantage on this account. For if we are afraid of a little tranſient pain, a touch of the lancet, or prick of the ſword, how much more tenderly ought we to be affected, with the apprehenſions of eternal death, and endleſs torments? If we are afraid of diſobliging a man, becauſe he may hurt us; how much more ſhall we ſtand in awe of God, who is ever preſent with us, and by the word of his mouth can ſpeak us dead? If we are ſo apt to be terrified with every little accident, from the wind, the earthquake, and the fire; how can we but be aſtoniſhed at the thoughts of that day, when the earth itſelf ſhall fall from under us, "and "the heavens ſhall melt with fervent heat." If

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we are ſubject to be fearful, let us be afraid of theſe things, and then our fear will prove our beſt preſervative. If we ſet the paſſions in the right way, they may be made at all times uſeful and ſerviceable to us.

Laſtly, I ſhall mention but one paſſion more, and that is pity. A paſſion that ſeems to be implanted in us, for the ſake of that moſt excellent Chriſtian duty, charity. A paſſion, that makes us partake of the griefs, fears and pains of other men, and is therefore properly called compaſſion. It was the paſſion of pity, which occaſioned the apoſtles declaration in the text; it being the cure of a poor impotent man, that made them paſs for Gods; and which forced them to declare, they were ſubject to paſſions like other men. It muſt be allowed, that this was the moſt natural error, that idolators could be ſubject to; for there is nothing ſo apt to gain us true veneration and eſteem, as the relieving the wants of others, and making their misfortunes our own. In nothing ſhall we appear ſo much like God, as by having a provident care, a tender concern for the good of his creatures. This is ſo kind, ſo humane, ſo generous a paſſion, and ſo religious a duty; that it is difficult to ſay, whether it be moſt nearly allied to nature or to grace. It is in truth the top and perfection of both. It is that love which leads to all the graces of the goſpel, and brings us to joy, peace, gentleneſs, goodneſs, and whatever is valuable, and praiſe-worthy.

Love is the tendereſt affection of the human ſoul, the firſt-fruits of the ſpirit; therefore let us ſhew our love in the moſt natural, the moſt religious way; and that is by our pity. There are many poor, many indigent perſons among us, that ſtand in need of our relief; and tho' we cannot aſſiſt them in that miraculous manner the apoſtles did; yet ſilver and gold we have, and ſhould alſo

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have pity and compaſſion, and let us give of what we have. Thoſe who pleaſe and magnify themſelves for their good temper, and think to paſs for Gods, by being void of paſſion, will act according to their opinion; but God grant that we may ſhew ourſelves to be men, by employing our paſſions agreeably to reaſon, as the apoſtles did, and then they will tend to the honour of God, and the benefit of mankind. I will now propoſe one means, fit and proper to be uſed by us, to have our paſſions under rule and government.

There is a great difference between thoſe who have been long ſubject to the power of unruly luſts and paſſions, and ſuch as have rather evil inclinations than ſinful habits to overcome; becauſe it is more difficult to reform the former than the latter; the thought of which ſhould prevail on all young perſons, to curb and reſtrain their affections betimes. And that our paſſions and luſts may not get the dominion over it, we muſt be careful to oppoſe and check them at firſt, before they become inordinate. We muſt be ſo vigilant as timely to rebuke and ſtifle all malicious, revengeful, proud, unclean, covetous or repining thoughts, at their firſt ſtarting up in our minds; for we muſt not play with, and encourage any corrupt and impure imaginations, or wicked thoughts. When we cheriſh in our hearts covetous, luſtful, or envious inclinations, we put our paſſions into a ferment, and ſo by degrees they riſe to that height as to get the maſtery of us, and then we are hurried into all kinds of ſin and miſery. So dangerous are ſuch beginnings as theſe, that the devil, when he diſcovers them in us, takes advantage thereof, and brings us at laſt to commit the greateſt wickedneſs, and the vileſt crimes, without fear or ſhame.

We muſt therefore carefully reſiſt the firſt motions and inclinations to ſin, leſt they break out into

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inordinate unruly paſſions; for it will be much eaſier to do this at firſt, than when they have gained power over us. This advice is very proper for thoſe whoſe paſſions are grown headſtrong, and have long held them in captivity. Let ſuch ſtrive to avoid the temptations to his luſts, whatever it be and oppoſe and weaken the firſt attacks, thereby to prevent the ill effects that might otherwiſe enſue. A little advantage is not inconſiderable and to be deſpiſed. A perſon who hath been long contracting an evil habit, muſt be content to mend by degrees; and by gradually gaining ground, he will at laſt obtain a compleat conqueſt over himſelf. Men of furious and choleric tempers, by conſtant reſolution, by ſuddenly rebuking themſelves after they have been ſurprized, and continuing in this good way, have at length attained a ſpirit of meekneſs and patience. And if once we gain a rectitude of temper, the government of our paſſions will not be difficult. In order to this we muſt be renewed in the ſpirit of our mind. A meek ſpirited man is not apt to break out into fury, nor a patient ſpirit to fall into deſpair, nor a philoſopher of an even temper, to be extravagantly raiſed or depreſſed at proſperity or adverſity. The chief difficulty lies in reforming the diſpoſition of our ſouls, and renewing the inner man. It is not ſo hard for a bad man to abſtain from one ſingle act of ſin, or to do a thing that is good, as to be converted from an evil temper, which leads him to vice, and renders him averſe to virtue. Thus it is eaſier for a miſer to give an alms upon occaſion, than to be cured of that covetouſneſs, which is ever a root of injuſtice and uncharitableneſs. It is eaſier for a choleric perſon to curb and ſuppreſs his paſſion and wrath now and then, than totally to ſubdue that haſtineſs of ſpirit, which upon any provocation prompts him to anger. It is eaſier for a licentious voluptuary to deny himſelf

ſelf ſometimes a vicious pleaſure, than quite to throw off the power of temptation. But however difficult this may be, it muſt be done. We muſt cleanſe ourſelves from all filthineſs of ſpirit, and be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

We muſt not forget to make our prayers to God, that he who giveth wiſdom liberally and upbraideth not, would teach us the wiſdom of governing our paſſions, and by the aid of his Holy Spirit, give us the victory over them; that he would create in us a clean heart, and renew a right ſpirit within us, and ſanctify us throughout. When an unruly paſſion is ſubdued, and a bad temper corrected, we have as it were obtained a new nature, and this is to be born anew, or of God. For theſe great bleſſings we muſt depend upon God, by daily and fervent prayer. And all our vigilance and pains with ourſelves, and our earneſt intreaties at the throne of grace, we muſt particularly apply againſt that ſin which doth ſo eaſily beſet us. againſt that paſſion we have the leaſt under command; for that which expoſeth us to the firſt miſchief, requires the greateſt care and ſtrength to ſubdue it. We muſt labour to ſet nature right where moſt crooked: this will give us rule over all our paſſions, becauſe the government of the reſt will more eaſily follow. And if we once keep our ground, we ſhall maintain the inward quiet and ſecurity of our minds, and being freed from the bondage of ſin, we ſhall enjoy the happy liberty of the children of God.

Diſcourſe

Diſcourſe LXXXIII. Dr. *Barrow.*

On the GOVERNMENT of the TONGUE.

James iii. 2.

If any man offend not in word, he is a perfect man.

THIS ſentence the apoſtle places at the head of a diſcourſe concerning the tongue, that double engine of good and evil; wherein is repreſented the excellent benefits and great miſchiefs it is apt to produce; how it is both a ſweet inſtrument of all goodneſs, and a ſharp weapon of all iniquity; and this is illuſtrated by compariſons very fit and pertinent. By not offending in word, is to be underſtood ſuch a conſtant reſtraint, and careful government of our tongue, as not to tranſgreſs the rules preſcribed by reaſon, or the law of God: not to ſuffer it to pervert the natural ends and proper uſes for which it was framed; ſuch as the promoting God's glory, our neighbour's benefit, and our own true welfare. By a perfect man is meant, a perſon accompliſhed and compleat in goodneſs, one of ſingular worth and integrity, a brave and excellent man, who, in the courſe of his life, is free from all notorious defects, and heinous faults; like David, "fulfilling all God's will, and having "reſpect to all his commandments." Thus was Noah, Abraham, and Job perfect. This is the notion of perfection in holy ſcripture. Not an abſolute exemption from all blame in life, which is not conſiſtent with the nature and ſtate of man here, where

where none with truth and modeſty can ſay, "I am "pure from ſin;" but every man muſt confeſs with Job, "If I juſtify myſelf, my own mouth "ſhall condemn me; if I ſay I am perfect, it ſhall "prove me perverſe." For "there is not a juſt "man upon earth, that doth good and ſinneth not." "In many things we offend all." There is no man abſolutely perfect. But if any man offend not in word, and conſtantly governs his tongue well, that man is perfect; perfect in ſuch kind and degree as human frailty admits; ſo eminently good, as that he may be reaſonably preſumed blameleſs in the courſe of his practice. So that the true meaning of the word is, that a conſtant government of our ſpeech, agreeably to right reaſon, is a clear demonſtration and convincing argument of a ſincere and ſolid goodneſs. The truth of which will more fully appear, from the following conſiderations.

As that a right government of our ſpeech is a ſtrong evidence of a good, pure, and calm mind; free from vicious deſires, diſorderly paſſions, and diſhoneſt intentions. For he, whoſe thoughts are commonly wicked, can never be innocently ſilent, nor his diſcourſe be good and profitable. It is no leſs difficult to conceal fire, check lightning, and confine a whirlwind, than to keep within due bounds, the exorbitant motions of a ſoul, that hath loſt the command of reaſon. Wrath burning in the breaſt, will have vent by the mouth; inward luſt will expreſs itſelf in lewd diſcourſe. If the fountain is polluted, the ſtreams cannot be expected clear or wholſome: "From the abundance of the "heart, the mouth ſpeaketh. A good man out of "the good treaſure of the heart, bringeth forth good "things; and an evil man out of the evil treaſure, "bringeth forth evil things." Indeed, ſometimes fair words, and a reſerved temper, may conceal a wicked heart. Shame, fear, or crafty deſigns may often

often repreſs the declaration of evil thoughts and purpoſes. But ſuch fits of diſſimulation laſt not long. The inteſtine jars between thoſe natural friends the heart and tongue, cannot be perpetual, or very durable. Speech is generally deemed the trueſt character of the mind, and ſureſt teſt of inward worth; as diſcloſing the hidden man of the heart, opening the cloſets of the breaſt, bringing the dark receſſes of the ſoul into clear light, rendering our thoughts viſible, and our intentions known. For in order to form a certain judgment of the merit and ability of another, we ſeldom deſire more than the opportunity of hearing him diſcourſe for a little time. Such a ſtrict affinity and connection do all men ſuppoſe between thoughts and words.

That the uſe of ſpeech hath an influence on all our actions, may be inferred from hence, that whoever governs it prudently, does alſo for the generality wiſely order his whole life. Speech is, indeed, the rudder that ſteers human affairs, the ſpring that puts in motion the wheel of action; the hands, feet, all the members and ſenſes act by its direction and impulſe. Our moſt conſiderable affairs are managed and conducted meerly by words; by them princes rule their ſubjects, generals command their armies, ſenators deliberate and debate about the greateſt matters of ſtate; by them advocates plead cauſes, and judges decide them; divines perform their offices, and adminiſter their inſtructions; merchants carry on trade and make bargains. Whatever is done in the court, or the hall, in the church, or at the exchange, in the ſchool, or ſhop, is performed ſolely by the tongue. It is the force of this little machine, that turns about the human world, that creates and tranſacts ſuch multiplicity of buſineſs. By it we communicate our ſecret conceptions, we inſtruct and adviſe one another, we conſult what is fit to be done, we conteſt

teſt about right, and diſpute for truth. The whole buſineſs of converſation, of commerce, of government and adminiſtration of juſtice, of learning and religion is thereby managed. Our recreations and diverſions, which fill up the ſpaces of time, and the wide intervals of buſineſs, chiefly conſiſt in the uſe of ſpeech. The province of which is ſo extenſive and univerſal, being either immediately the matter, or by conſequence the ſource of all our actions, that he who conſtantly governs it with wiſdom and prudence, may juſtly be eſteemed to live excellently well. Indeed,

To govern the tongue rightly, is exceeding difficult, requiring not only great goodneſs, judgment, and art, but much vigilance and circumſpection, the doing whereof is an inſtance of great virtue. For ſince the tongue is a looſe and nimble engine, which the leaſt breath of thought ſtirs and moves any way, it cannot but demand much attention to keep it at reſt, or in a right motion. And ſince numberleſs ſwarms of things are always roving in the fancy, and from thence inceſſantly obtruding themſelves upon the tongue; much application of mind and great judgment are requiſite to ſelect what are good, and reject all that is bad and improper to be ſpoken. Since temptations continually occur, provoking or alluring us to offend herein, every object we behold, every company we are engaged in, every accident befalling us, do continually ſuggeſt ſomewhat tending thereto. The condition of our neighbour, if high, moving us to flatter; if low, to inſult: our own fortune, if proſperous, elating; if adverſe, dejecting us; any action exciting fond admiration, if pleaſing; harſh cenſure, if diſagreeable. Since then we are thus liable to ſpeak amiſs, it requires the utmoſt ſkill and caution, great induſtry and reſolution, to manage it with prudence and diſcretion. For which purpoſe we ought to imitate

mitate the earneſt and watchful care of the holy Pſalmiſt; "I have (ſays he) purpoſed that my "mouth ſhould not offend. I ſaid I will take heed "to my ways, that I ſin not with my tongue." Thus to maintain a conſtant guard over our heart and ways; thus prudently to curb and govern our ſpeech, muſt aſſuredly be the mark of a very good perſon. Becauſe

There are more advantages of privacy, and fewer reſtraints attending irregular ſpeech, than any bad action. A man can ſpeak ill with leſs inward regret and diſſatisfaction, and with leſs outward hazard, than he can act ill. Bad actions require time to obſerve and conſider, as well as to perform them; but ill words are ſubtle and tranſient, often uttered raſhly without thought before, or reflection afterwards. Bad actions have uſually viſible effects immediately conſequent on them, but words operate inſenſibly, and at a diſtance. There are alſo frequent occaſions of ſpeaking ill on preſumption of ſecrecy, which is often entertained with complacency and applauſe. The vile abuſes of ſpeech, ſuch as blaſphemy, treaſon, and ſlander may be ſafely whiſpered into ears, which will receive them with pleaſure and commendation; and in moſt caſes, bad language is neither ſtrictly prohibited, nor ſeverely puniſhed by human laws, as is an evil action, by which means the guilt of this ſin ſeems little or none; and perſons who practiſe it, do often paſs for innocent, in the opinion of themſelves and others. Men generally think their tongue is free, and that any words may be diſpenſed with; "our "lips are our own, who is lord over us?" So that conſidering how many encouragements there are to offend herein, and how few reſtraints we have to deter us therefrom; he that carefully governs his tongue, according to the rules of duty and reaſon, may juſtly be reputed a very good man. And,

As moſt of the enormities, miſchiefs and troubles, whereby the ſouls of men are defiled, the minds diſcompoſed, and their lives diſquieted, are the effects of ill governed ſpeech; that being what chiefly perverts juſtice, ſows diſſentions, raiſes paſſions and animoſities, embroils the world with factions and ſeditions, makes men wrong and abuſe, deceive and ſeduce, defame and diſgrace one another; whereby innumerable vexations and diſturbances ariſe among men: He therefore that ſo well governs his ſpeech, as to preſerve himſelf from the guilt and inconveniences of all ſuch evils, muſt neceſſarily be eſteemed a very wiſe and happy, a very good and worthy perſon.

A tongue ſo prudently managed, cannot fail of producing much honour to God, great benefit and comfort to ourſelves and neighbours. Such diſcourſe will be ſweet and pleaſant, ſolid and uſeful; tending to endear converſation, to cement good ſociety, to promote love, to inſtruct and edify, chear and comfort one another. Such a "tongue is health, "his mouth is a well and tree of life, his lips diſ-"perſe knowledge; others ſhall be ſatisfied with "good, by the fruit of his mouth." Theſe are the effects of innocent, ſober, and prudent diſcourſe, and where found, are a high commendation of the excellent virtue of the perſon; and the rarity of the practice is a conſiderable argument in favour of the excellency and worth of the virtue: for we may obſerve many will commit horrible outrages with their tongue, who in other reſpects are very harmleſs; we frequently ſee perſons very punctual in their dealings, who in their language are very unjuſt, robbing their neighbour of his reputation by envious detraction and malicious cenſure. There are many who abhor ſhedding a man's blood, yet without ſcruple or remorſe will by calumnious tales and virulent reproaches aſſaſſinate his credit, and murder

der his good name, though, perhaps, dearer to him than his life. There are ſuch, as in all parts of morality are rigorouſly exact, yet their tongue ſhall be often incontinent, envious and diſſolute; even mighty pretenders to godlineſs, and zealous practiſers of devotion, cannot forbear ſpeaking things repugnant to God's laws, and prejudicial to his honour. Thus in moſt inſtances of good life, the government of the tongue is leaſt regarded, which evidently proves the great excellency of the virtue.

And as it is certainly our duty to aim at perfection, to endeavour the attainment of integrity in heart and life; ſo ſhould we more eſpecially labour to govern our tongue, and guide it with diſcretion. To which end we ought well to conſider and underſtand the nature of thoſe ſeveral offences to which ſpeech is liable, with the evil and inconvenience thereof, that we may not dare to tranſgreſs. Theſe are many and various, equal in number to our thoughts and actions. Some are committed againſt God and religion; others againſt our neighbour, violating juſtice, charity, or peace; others againſt ourſelves, infringing ſobriety, diſcretion, or modeſty; and ſome are of a more general nature, inconſiſtent with all parts of our duty. In moſt, if not all offences of ſpeech, there is a complication of impiety, iniquity, and imprudence, reſpecting God, our neighbour, or ourſelves; and directly contrary to one of thoſe capital virtues, piety, charity, and ſobriety, to which all our duty is reducible. But at preſent I ſhall confine the remainder of my diſcourſe, to ſuch offences of the tongue, as are committed againſt piety. Theſe are,

Speaking blaſphemouſly againſt God, or reproachfully of religion, with intent to ſubvert mens faith in God, and impair their reverence of him. There are thoſe who ſet "their mouth againſt the heavens,

" who exalt their voice againſt the holy one of Iſ-
" rael, the God of Gods." This of all impieties is the moſt enormous, expreſſing enmity towards God, and proclaiming war againſt Heaven; and he that does it, is guilty of great folly and wickedneſs, for either he believes or diſtruſts the exiſtence of God, and the truth of religion. If he believes them, is it not deſperate madneſs, adviſedly to draw down heaven's vengeance on his head, by oppoſing the irreſiſtible power, and provoking the inexible juſtice of God? What abominable folly and baſeneſs is it, thus to abuſe God's immenſe goodneſs and mercy, offering ſuch indignity to the author of his being, and free donor of all he enjoys? What monſtrous ſtupidity and perverſeneſs is it thus wilfully to defy his own welfare, to forfeit all happineſs, and precipitately plunge himſelf into a double hell, that of bitter remorſe here, and of endleſs pain hereafter? But if he that reproaches God and religion, does it from a diſtruſt of both, ſuch an one is equally inexcuſable; becauſe he acts againſt legions of cogent arguments and clear teſtimonies, againſt the voice of nature, and faith of hiſtory, againſt the ſettled judgment of wiſe and ſober perſons, who have ſtudied and conſidered the point; againſt the current tradition of all ages, and general conſent of mankind; and whoever can do all this, proves himſelf guilty of the greateſt indiſcretion and arrogance. Nay, it is apparently inſolent, in that it not only affronts and contradicts the common ſentiments of mankind, but abuſes the chief objects of their higheſt reſpect and affection, care and concern; namely, God and religion. And who can ſuffer to have his God, his beſt friend and benefactor, his great patron and ſovereign, defamed and vilified? Who can patiently bear to have that object ſlighted or deſpiſed, in whom he places his greateſt hopes and ſupreme felicity? Beſides, that

a due reverence of God, and a conſcientious regard to religion, moſt evidently tends to produce great benefits to mankind; it being the main ſupports of common honeſty and ſobriety, the ſole reſtraints to keep men from fraud and violence, brutiſh luſts and paſſions. For religion apparently preſcribes the beſt rules, and impoſes the ſtrongeſt engagements to perform thoſe actions, which will moſt ſecure and promote the public and private happineſs of mankind. It was therefore well obſerved by Cicero, that "piety being removed, juſtice could not ſubſiſt, no "faith could be ſecured, no ſociety could be pre-"ſerved among men;" it being in vain to imagine, that without a religious conſcience, any one will be a good ſubject, a true friend, or an honeſt man. Since then the credit of religion is ſo very beneficial and uſeful to mankind, he muſt be exceedingly wicked and malicious, who by profane diſcourſe ſhall endeavour to ſupplant or ſhake it. He that ſpeaks againſt God or providence, hates goodneſs, and would not have it prevail in the hearts of men. He that reviles religion abhors virtue, and would not have it practiſed in the world. Such therefore are not to be conſidered as ſimple embracers of error, but as utter enemies to the public good. For indeed, was any man ſure that religion was only deviſed by men, as a ſupplemental aid to reaſon and power; that it was merely an implement of policy to make people loyal to their prince, upright in their dealing, ſober in their converſation, moderate in their paſſions, and virtuous in all their actions; yet even then it would be baſe and inhuman, to endeavour to defeat ſuch excellent deſigns and purpoſes. He that would attempt it, deſerves to be reputed an enemy to the welfare of mankind, and ought to be treated as a peſtilent diſturber of the world.

Another offence againſt piety, is to ſpeak looſely and wantonly, eſpecially to make holy things mat-

ter of ſport and mockery, to play and trifle with them. We ſhould not without great awe and reverence, think of the great and glorious majeſty of heaven, much leſs preſume to mention his name, his word, his inſtitutions, any thing that immediately concerns him, without the profoundeſt regard and veneration. "There not being a word in our "tongue, but thou, O Lord, knoweſt it al-"together." God's favour and mercy, everlaſting bliſs and glory, the treaſures and joys of heaven, the miſeries of hell torments are not jeſting matter. It infinitely therefore concerns us, to think and ſpeak of ſuch divine ſubjects, with great ſeriouſneſs and ſober attention. And as for things ſacred, they were inſtituted by God, in order to compoſe our hearts and ſettle our affections in a ſerious frame; to raiſe inward ſatisfaction, and joys purely ſpiritual; to exerciſe our ſolemn thoughts, and employ our tongue on the beſt ſubjects and diſcourſes. Our ſpeech therefore about them, ſhould be profitable, "for the uſe of edifying, that it may "miniſter grace unto the hearers."

Another great offence againſt piety, is raſh and vain ſwearing in common diſcourſe. A crime that ſtrangely prevails in the world, tho' eſteemed by many a graceful quality, a mark of fine breeding. Who with ſome is thought ſo compleat a gentleman, as he that hath the ſkill and confidence to adorn every ſentence with an oath or curſe, and making bold at every turn, to challenge the Almighty to damn and deſtroy him? And yet this vile practice of ſwearing is moſt expreſsly and ſtrictly prohibited. "I ſay "unto you, ſwear not at all. Above all things, my "brethren, ſwear not——leſt you enter into con-"demnation." How monſtrouſly wicked then is it, for any man to break laws ſo plain and ſevere; that it ſhould paſs for not only a tolerable but even commendable practice, to violate ſo manifeſt and important

portant a duty? What greater affront can be offered to our religion, and to all that is ſacred? The very light of nature condemns this practice, and even Heathens have diſclaimed againſt it, as derogatory to the reverence of the deity, and unſuitable to the gravity of a wiſe man. It is prejudicial to human ſociety; in regard the deciſion of right, the ſecurity of government, and the preſervation of peace, much depend on the awe and ſolemnity of oaths. They are the ſureſt bonds by which the conſciences of men are tied to the atteſtation of truth, and obſervance of faith. But if by common and careleſs uſe, they are rendered cheap and vile, then little ſerious truth can be expected from them, either at the bar, or in the church. For who will regard the teſtimony of God, or dread his judgment at one time and place, that is at other times contemning and abuſing his ſacred name and authority? This evil practice alſo greatly leſſens the credit of him that uſes it, as it renders the truth of what he ſays liable to be ſuſpected. For what can engage him to ſpeak truly, who ſwears vainly? We have great reaſon to diſtruſt him, who thinks his own bare affirmation not to deſerve belief. For if his word is enough, why does he back it with ſuch aſſeverations? why unprovoked calls he God to witneſs, if he ſuppoſes his own honeſty ſufficient to aſſure the truth of what he ſays?

And this offence is more particularly aggravated by conſidering, that it hath no temptation alluring to it, nor yet brings any advantage with it, and may eaſily be avoided or corrected; there being no natural inclination nor ſtrong appetite exciting us thereto. It gratifies no ſenſe, affords no profit, procures no honour. The ſound of it is not melodious but horrid to the ears. Therefore of all ſinners, the ſwearer is apparently the moſt fooliſh, and makes the worſt bargain; for he ſins gratis,

and ſells his ſoul for nothing. An epicure hath ſome reaſon to alledge, an extortioner is a man of wiſdom in compariſon of him; for they enjoy ſome pleaſure, or acquire ſome gain here, in lieu of their ſalvation hereafter. But the common ſwearer offends heaven, and abandons happineſs, he knows not why, or for what. He hath not ſo much as the common plea of human infirmity to excuſe him; he cannot ſay he was induced thereto by any one temptation. Beſides, we ſhould conſider, that as ourſelves, all our members and powers were chiefly deſigned and framed, to ſerve and glorify our maker; (to do which is the greateſt perfection, and nobleſt privilege of our nature) ſo our ſpeaking faculty, the tongue, was given us to declare our admiration and reverence of him, to expreſs our love and gratitude towards him, to profeſs our truſt and confidence in him, to celebrate his praiſes, to acknowledge his benefits, and to promote his honour and ſervice. This is the moſt proper, worthy and due uſe of our tongue, for which it was created, to which it is dedicated, and is therefore often called our glory, and the beſt member we have. It is that whereby we excel all creatures here below, whereby we conſort with the bleſſed angels above, in offering praiſe to our creator. Therefore to uſe it in any impious diſcourſe, or with it to profane God's holy name, to violate his laws, to unhallow his ſacred ordinance, to offer diſhonour and indignity to him, is a moſt unnatural abuſe, a vile ingratitude to him. I ſhall only add, that ſince the faculty of ſpeech was given us, to praiſe our maker, to benefit our neighbour, to be an inſtrument of mutual aſſiſtance, friendly commerce, and pleaſant converſation; for the inſtructing, adviſing and comforting one another; let us therefore be careful not to pervert and abuſe it,

it, to the injury or diſgrace of God, or of our neighbour, which is both irrational and unnatural.

To conclude; our diſcourſe ſhould be decent, grave, and venerable, ſuitable to the profeſſion of Chriſtians. Gravity and modeſty are the fences of piety, which being once removed, ſin will eaſily attempt to ſeduce us. But as we ſhould not be demure, ſo we ought not to be impudent; as we may be free, ſo we ſhould not be vain; as we ought to be friendly complaiſant, ſo we ſhould avoid all levity. And if without injuring others, or derogating from ourſelves, we can be facetious; if we can innocently and conveniently uſe witty jeſts, we may ſometimes do it; ſo as we obſerve St. Paul's advice, "to beware of fooliſh talking and jeſting, which "are not convenient."

Diſcourſe LXXXIV. Abp. *Tillotſon.*

Againſt EVIL SPEAKING.

Titus iii. 2.

To ſpeak evil of no man.

GENERAL perſuaſions to repentance and a good life, and invectives againſt ſin and wickedneſs at large, are certainly of good uſe to recommend religion and virtue, and to expoſe the deformity and danger of a vicious courſe. But if we would effectually reform men, we muſt examine the great and common diſorders of their lives, and repreſent their faults ſo clearly, as may demonſtrate the evil and danger of them, in order to effect a cure. To this end, I have made choice of a common reigning vice of the age, "calumny and "evil ſpeaking," for the ſubject of my preſent diſcourſe. I ſhall conſider the nature of this vice, "to ſpeak evil of no man;" that is, not to defame, ſlander, nor hurt the reputation of any man.

This vice conſiſts in ſpeaking any thing which tends to the diſparagement, reproach, or leſſening of the reputation and good name of others, and this whether what is ſaid be true or not. If falſe and we know it, then it is calumny; if we take it on the report of others, it is ſlander. If we know the thing true, yet it tends to defame and prejudice our neighbour's reputation; and to ſay the evil of others which is true, without good reaſon, is a great fault, and contrary to that charity and goodneſs which Chriſtianity requires. If we are the

firſt authors of an ill report, or relate it from others, ſtill it is evil ſpeaking, becauſe the perſon either way is equally defamed. To ſpeak evil of a man to his face, though it ſeems the moſt generous way, yet it is a great fault, and what we call reviling; to ſay it behind his back is more mean and baſe, and what is properly called ſlander, or backbiting; but whether it be done directly, and in expreſs terms, or more obſcurely, and by way of inſinuation, yet it is equally criminal, if the perſon be actually defamed; and many times the deepeſt wounds are given by ſmooth and artificial ways of ſlander. So that it matters not in what manner ſlander is dreſſed up; for if it tends to defame, and diminiſh a man's reputation, it is the ſin here forbidden by the apoſtle, to "ſpeak evil of no man."

But it will be proper to conſider the extent, bounds and limits of this prohibition, "to ſpeak evil "of no man;" and which is not to be underſtood abſolutely, as forbidding us to ſay any thing bad of others, this being in many caſes a reaſonable and neceſſary duty; ſuch as the preventing ſome great evil, or procuring ſome conſiderable good to ourſelves, or others. For inſtance, it is not only lawful and commendable, but many times our duty to ſpeak evil of others, in order to the amendment of the perſon guilty thereof; in ſuch a caſe, we may privately tell another his faults, or reveal them to one who is more fit and proper to reprove him. This, ſo far from being a breach of charity, is one of the beſt teſtimonies of it. For, perhaps, the party is innocent of what hath been reported of him, and then it is kind to give him an opportunity of vindicating himſelf; or if guilty, being privately and prudently told of it, he may reform: in this caſe it is moſt adviſeable to reveal men's faults; admoniſh a friend (ſays the ſon of Sirach) "it may be he hath not done it; and if he have,

"that

" that he do it no more; admoniſh a friend, it " may be he hath not ſaid it: and if he have, that " he ſpeak it not again; admoniſh a friend, for " many times it is a ſlander, and believe not every " tale." But then we muſt do this out of kindneſs, and free from paſſion; we muſt not reproach and revile men, under a pretence of reproving and reforming them, and tell them their faults more to ſhew our authority, than our charity. It requires much addreſs and gentle application ſo to reprove, as not to irritate and exaſperate the perſon we intend to reform. Again, this is not only lawful, but our duty, when we are legally called to bear witneſs againſt another; a good man would not be an accuſer, unleſs the public good, or the prevention of ſome great evil requires it. But when he is called to give ſuch teſtimony, in obedience to the laws, and out of reverence to his oath, ſo far from deſerving blame for ſo doing, it would be an unpardonable fault, was he to conceal any part of the truth. It is alſo lawful to puniſh the faults of others in our own neceſſary defence. When we cannot conceal another's fault without betraying our own innocency, no charity requires us to ſuffer defamation, to ſave another man's reputation; charity begins at home; and we ought to ſecure our own good name before others. We are to love our neighbour as ourſelves; ſo that the love of ourſelves is firſt, otherwiſe it could not be the rule and meaſure of our love to our neighbour. Beſides theſe more obvious and remarkable caſes, this prohibition does not hinder any from obſerving in common converſation, that ill of others which is already made public; or from ſpeaking of another's miſcarriage, where no bad uſe will be made thereof; ſo as we take no delight in hearing, or ſpeaking evil of others. Theſe are all the uſual caſes that can be neceſſary for us to ſpeak

evil

evil of other men; and which are ſo reaſonable, that the prohibition of the apoſtle, to ſpeak evil of any man, cannot juſtly be extended to them; and did we only in theſe and the like inſtances, ſpeak to the prejudice of another's good name, the tongues of men would be very innocent, and the world exceeding quiet.

I will now conſider the evil of this practice, both in its cauſes and conſequences. One general cauſe of evil ſpeaking, is ill-nature and cruelty of diſpoſition. Ill-nature frequently paſſeth for wit, as cunning doth for wiſdom, though in truth they are as far diſtant, as vice and virtue. There is no greater evidence of the bad temper of mankind, than the general proneneſs of man to this vice; men commonly incline to the cenſorious and uncharitable ſide; and exerciſe their wit more in ſatire and cenſure, than in praiſe and panegyric. In the way of invective, invention is a plentiful, never-failing ſpring; this kind of wit is moſt eaſy and acceptable, greedily entertained, and greatly applauded; every man being glad to hear others abuſed, not conſidering how ſoon it may be his own turn. The great and ſerious buſineſs of moſt meetings and viſits, after the neceſſary compliments are over, is to ſpeak evil of others, and backbite the world. It is the ſource of converſation, and all diſcourſe is eſteemed flat and dull, which contains not reflection on ſomebody. For men generally love rather to hear evil of others than good, and are ſecretly pleaſed with ill reports, which they receive with greedineſs and delight; though ſtill they hate thoſe that propagate them, concluding they will do the ſame by themſelves in other companies. This is more eſpecially practiſed in matters of religion. All parties ſeem to think they do God ſervice by blaſting their adverſaries reputation. Such indeed pretend to be Chriſtians, and the diſciples

ciples of him who taught nothing but kindneſs, meekneſs and charity; and yet with what a murderous diſpoſition will they attack and ruin another's reputation. If they hear any good of their adverſaries, how many objections will they raiſe, with what caution and coldneſs will they receive and admit it? but on the other ſide, every man is a good and ſubſtantial author of an ill report.

Sometimes this vice proceeds from malice, revenge and envy. Men in heat of paſſion do not ſo much conſider what is true, as what is ſpiteful and miſchievous, and will ſpeak evil of others in revenge of ſome paſt injury; and too many are ſo wicked, as to invent and raiſe falſe reports on purpoſe to wound the reputation of others. This is a diabolical temper, the devil having his name from calumny and falſe accuſation, and it is his nature to be always ready to foment this evil ſpirit among men. Again, there are too many who look with an evil eye on the good that is in others, imagining that their reputation and commendable qualities obſcure, and ſtand in their light; and therefore endeavour to eclipſe their virtues, leſt they ſhould ſhine too bright, and darken their own. This makes them greedily to entertain, and induſtriouſly to publiſh, whatever ſerves to that purpoſe, in order to raiſe themſelves on the ruins of other men's reputation.

And as to the conſequences and effects of this ſin, they are very pernicious both to the ſlandered, and to thoſe who ſlander others. To the former, it is certainly a great injury, commonly a high provocation, but always matter of grief and trouble to them. For if the evil we ſay of them is not true, yet the injury is great beyond imagination, and all poſſible reputation. And though we ſhould endeavour afterwards to vindicate them, yet that can make but little amends; becauſe the vindication

tion ſeldom reaches ſo far as the reproach, and few are forward to puniſh their offence, or receive good impreſſions after ill ones are imbibed. But ſuppoſing the ſlander true, and that a man's reputation is deſervedly ſtained, ſtill it is great harm and damage to him. Beſides, the injury is commonly a very high provocation, and frequently ends in dangerous and deſperate quarrels; and at the beſt, is always matter of grief to the perſon defamed. And Chriſtianity, which is the beſt natured inſtitution in the world, forbids us doing thoſe things, whereby we may grieve one another. A man's good name is a tender thing, and a wound there ſinks deep into the ſpirit, even of a wiſe and good man. And the more innocent the perſon, the more ſenſible he is, of ſuch hard uſage; becauſe he does not treat others ſo, nor is conſcious that he deſerves it himſelf. And as to the ſlanderer, the conſequences of this vice are as bad or worſe to him; whoever is addicted to ſpeak evil of others, gives a bad character of himſelf, even to thoſe he deſires to pleaſe; who, if wiſe, will conclude he ſpeaks as bad of them to others, as he does of others to them; and often revenge goes farther than words. A reproachful and ſlanderous ſpeech hath coſt many a man a duel, perhaps the loſs of his own and another's life, beſides that of his ſoul; and though none of theſe great miſchiefs ſhould happen, yet many other ways it may be very inconvenient. For no man knows in the chance of things, and the mutability of human affairs, whoſe kindneſs and good-will he may want before he dies. So that did a man only conſult his own quiet, he ought to refrain from evil ſpeaking. But there is an infinitely greater danger hanging over us from God. If we allow ourſelves in this evil practice, all our religion is good for nothing. So St. James expreſsly tells us, "if any

"man

" men among you ſeem to be religious, and bridles " not his tongue, but deceives his own heart, that " man's religion is vain." And St. Paul puts " ſlan- " derers and revilers amongſt thoſe who ſhall not in- " herit the kingdom of God." And our bleſſed Saviour hath told us, " that by our words we ſhall " be juſtified and condemned." And the wiſe man's counſel is, " refrain your tongue from back- " biting, for there is no word ſo ſecret that ſhall " go for nought, and the mouth that ſlandereth, " ſlayeth the ſoul."

I now proceed to offer ſome other arguments and conſiderations to diſſuade men from this vice. As, that the uſe of ſpeech is a prerogative peculiar to man, and beſtowed on him for ſome excellent ends and purpoſes. That by this faculty we might communicate our thoughts more eaſily to one another, and conſult for our mutual comfort and benefit; not to enable us to be hurtful and injurious, but helpful and beneficial to each other. The Pſalmiſt calls our tongue our glory, therewith we praiſe God and bleſs men; but to bleſs is to ſpeak well of any, and to wiſh them ſo. We therefore pervert the uſe of ſpeech, and turn our glory into ſhame, when we abuſe this faculty to the injury and reproach of others. And not to ſpeak ill of any is a very cheap kindneſs; a good word is an eaſy obligation, but not to ſpeak ill requires only our ſilence, which coſts nothing. There is no quality that recommends us more to the favour and good will of men, than to be free from this vice. Every one deſires ſuch a man's friendſhip, and is apt to repoſe a great truſt and confidence in him, and will praiſe him when he is dead; and next to piety towards God, and righteouſneſs to men, nothing is eſteemed more commendable, than that he was rarely heard to ſpeak ill of any. It was a ſingular character of a Roman gentleman,

that

that he "knew not what it was to give any man an "ill word." Beſides, we ought to conſider how little we ourſelves ſhould like this uſage. It is natural for us to deſire every man's good word, eſpecially every good man's; we are glad to have our faults concealed, and not to be reviled, or hardly ſpoken of; and with what face or reaſon, can we expect this from others, if we behave otherwiſe to them. There are few ſo innocent, and free from infirmities of greater faults, as not to be obnoxious to reproach. The wiſeſt, the moſt virtuous, and moſt perfect among men, have ſome little vanity or affection, which expoſes them to the cenſure of malicious wits. We ſhould therefore often turn our thoughts on ourſelves, to ſee our own faults, and remember our Saviour's words, "he that is "without ſin, let him caſt the firſt ſtone;" and ſometimes it is as great a charity, to conceal the evil we know of others, as if we relieved them in great neceſſity.

Laſtly, I will give ſome rules and directions for the prevention of this great evil among men. And firſt, let us never ſpeak evil of any man, but what we certainly know; whenever we poſitively accuſe another of any crime, though in private among friends, let us ſpeak as if it were on our oath, becauſe God ſees and hears us. This charity, juſtice, and truth demand of us. He that eaſily credits an ill report, is near as faulty as the firſt inventor; for though we do not make, yet we thereby commonly propagate a lye. We ſhould therefore never ſpeak ill of any on common fame, which is generally falſe, always uncertain; and in moſt caſes, it is alſo a fault to report the evil of men which is true. Before we ſpeak evil of any man, we ſhould conſider whether he hath not ſome way obliged us; if ſo, it will be ingratitude to ſpeak ill of him; or if a ſtranger, yet poſſibly hereafter,

we may be acquainted with, if not related to, and obliged by him; and how then ſhall we be aſhamed at having thus injured him? Again,

Let us accuſtom ourſelves to pity the faults of others, and not to take pleaſure in publiſhing them. This humanity requires of us, if we conſider the great infirmities of human nature, how liable we ourſelves are to be tempted, how ſevere a puniſhment every fault and miſcarriage is to itſelf, and how terribly it expoſeth us to the wrath of God in this world, and the next. When we hear any evil ſaid of another, we ſhould then ſpeak what good we know. It is more humane and honourable to vindicate and defend, than to accuſe and revile others; or if a man is ill ſpoken of, it is fair and equal, that his good and bad qualities ſhould be mentioned together, otherwiſe by miſrepreſentation an indifferent man may be made a monſter. They who will obſerve nothing in a wiſe man but his over-ſights and follies, and in a good man, only his failings and infirmities, may eaſily render a wiſe and good man very deſpicable. Should we collect all the paſſionate ſpeeches, all the imprudent actions of the beſt man, all that he may have ſaid and done amiſs in his whole life, and preſent it at one view, concealing his wiſdom and virtues; in this diſguiſe he would look like a madman. And yet if his life was fairly repreſented, his many and great virtues ſet againſt his failings and infirmities, he would appear to be an excellent perſon; it is then but juſt, that with his load of faults, he ſhould have the due praiſe of his real virtues.

Beſides, every man ought to mind himſelf, his own duty and concerns. Let us but in good earneſt ſtrive to mind ourſelves, and it will be work enough; we ſhall then have but little time to talk of others. Let us alſo ſet a watch before the

door

door of our lips, and not ſpeak but upon conſideration. We ſhould uſe great caution and circumſpection, conſider well of whom, and what we are going to ſpeak. I do not mean, that men ſhould be ſtiff or ſullen in company. The true art of converſation, ſeems to be this; an appearance of freedom and openneſs, without a reſolute reſervedneſs. We ſhould endeavour to get our minds furniſhed with matter of diſcourſe, concerning things uſeful in themſelves, and not hurtful to others; a mind wiſe and good, will eaſily find matter enough for innocent converſation; ſuch as will be acceptable without injuring others.

Having thus repreſented the great evil of this vice, it may be proper to ſay ſomething to thoſe who ſuffer by it. Are we guilty of the evil ſaid of us? Let us reform and prevent all future occaſions; and ſo turn the malice of our enemies to our own advantage, and thereby defeat their ill intentions. Are we innocent? we ſhould bear it patiently, imitating the pattern of our bleſſed Saviour, "who when he was reviled, reviled not again, but "committed himſelf to him that judgeth righte-"ouſly." We ought alſo to conſider, that though it is a misfortune to be evil ſpoken of, yet it is their fault who do it, and not our own. But when men ſpeak ill of us, we ſhould remember Plato's advice, "To live ſo, as that no body may believe "them."

What remains, is to reflect on what hath been ſaid, in order to practiſe; for all is nothing, if we do not practiſe what we know to be our duty. Many are ſo taken up with the deep points and myſteries of religion, that they never think of the common duties and offices of human life. But faith and a good life are ſo far from claſhing with one another, that the Chriſtian religion hath made them inſeparable. True faith is neceſſary in order

to a good life, and a good life is the genuine product of a right belief; and therefore the one ought never to be inſiſted on, to the prejudice of the other. But ſome men, perhaps, will ſay, that this is meer morality. I anſwer, that this is ſcripture, and Chriſtian morality. Nay, let me add, that no man truly believes the Chriſtian religion, who lives in the neglect of ſo plain a duty, and in the practice of a ſin ſo clearly condemned by it, as is this of evil ſpeaking. There is ſcarce any black catalogue of ſins in the bible, but we find this among them; "out of the heart, ſays our Saviour, proceed "evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, "falſe witneſs, evil ſpeaking; and the apoſtle ranks "backbiters with fornicators, murderers, and haters "of God, who ſhall not inherit the kingdom of "God;" and which is more, they who are ſaid to be guilty of this, and other very great vices and enormities, are noted by the apoſtle to be great pretenders of religion, "having a form of godlineſs, "but denying the power thereof." So that it is no new thing, for men to make a more than ordinary profeſſion of Chriſtianity, and yet at the ſame time live directly contrary to the precepts of that holy religion. As if any pretence to myſtery, and other extraordinary attainments in the knowledge of Chriſt, could exempt men from obedience to his laws, and ſet them above the virtues of a good life. If then we believe the bible to be the word of God, we ought not to allow ourſelves in the practice of a ſin, than which there is ſcarce any that is more frequently mentioned, more ſeverely reproved, and more odiouſly branded in that holy book.

To conclude; the ſin I have been conſidering is plainly condemned by the word of God; the duty I have been recommending, is eaſy for every man to underſtand, and by the grace of God not hard for any one to practiſe, who will but reſolve

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to keep a guard on himſelf; and moſt reaſonable for all men, eſpecially Chriſtians, to obſerve. A duty as eaſy, as is a reſolute ſilence upon juſt occaſion; as reaſonable, as is prudence, juſtice, charity, and the preſervation of peace and good will among men, can make it; and of as neceſſary and indiſpenſable obligation, as the authority of God can render any thing. Let us then be perſuaded to take up David's deliberate reſolution, "I will "take heed to my ways, that I offend not with my "tongue; for if any man offend not in word, the "ſame is a perfect man."

Diſcourſe LXXXV. Bp. *Gibſon.*

Of TEMPERANCE, in EATING and DRINKING.

1 Cor. ix. 25.

Every man that ſtriveth for the maſtery, is temperate in all things; now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible.

THE apoſtle here alludes to thoſe games and races that were celebrated among the Corinthians, in which the victors were rewarded with crowns and garlands; and ſuch were their deſires after theſe victories and rewards, that they who ſtrove for the prize, regulated their diet and exerciſe, in order to improve their ſtrength and activity; chearfully ſubmitting to the ſtricteſt abſtinence, and denying themſelves their moſt beloved pleaſures. They were temperate in all things, or as the original better expreſſes it, they were reſolutely temperate and regular, ſo that nothing could break their conſtancy and reſolution; and if they could do all this to obtain a corruptible crown, much more ſhould we Chriſtians willingly and chearfully ſubmit, to all ſuch regulations and ſelf-denials, as the goſpel requires; and not be tempted to any exceſs, when we have in our eye an incorruptible and immortal crown of glory. Though theſe words may be ſo taken, as to ſignify an univerſal government over our inordinate appetites and deſires; yet in this place, the apoſtle more immediately alludes to the diſcipline obſerved at the games and races, with reſpect to a ſtrict regulation in meats

meats and drinks. But by ſhewing what are the proper rules and measure of a regular uſe of theſe, the great ſinfulneſs of any irregular abuſe of them, will more evidently appear both in itſelf, in its conſequence, and effects. However, it ſhould be obſerved, that the conſtitutions, ages, and other circumſtances of men being ſo very different, there can be no one fixed rule or meaſure in this point; becauſe the ſame proportion, which to one perſon may not be a ſufficient nouriſhment, may to another be exceſs; ſo that what is neceſſary, or convenient, within the bounds of moderation, muſt in great meaſure be left to the judgment of every Chriſtian, upon an honeſt and conſcientious regard to the true ends of eating and drinking; namely, the preſerving of life, the refreſhing the ſpirits, the preparing ourſelves for the buſineſs of that ſtation, wherein God's providence hath placed us.

As God hath planted in every man a natural deſire of life, ſo the firſt and moſt immediate end of eating and drinking, is for the preſervation of it. But then we are always to remember, that it is life, we are to provide for, and not luxury; that the uſing God's creatures more liberally than nature requires or can bear, is not the way to preſerve, but to ſhorten and deſtroy life; and that is is very ſinful, ungrateful, and unreaſonable, for us to ſuffer an inordinate appetite to turn thoſe bleſſings to the deſtruction of life, which God graciouſly gives us, for the preſervation of it. Not that we are to live by weight and meaſure, or were preſently guilty of ſin, if we exceed what will barely ſupport life, for this is impoſſible; and beſides, the fear of tranſgreſſing would fill the mind with perpetual ſcruples, and deprive us of the enjoyment of God's gifts: But the guard and caution which God requires of us, is, to keep from what will weaken and deſtroy life; and there is ſo great a difference between what will barely ſup-

port, or overcharge nature, that we may by obſerving a due proportion, very innocently enjoy the bleſſings of heaven.

Another end of eating and drinking, is to repair and refreſh the ſpirits, when waſted by thought and buſineſs. It has pleaſed God to clothe our ſouls with bodies of a weak, heavy, and unactive conſtitution, which cannot endure long application of any kind, without growing faint, weary, and uneaſy; and therefore he has provided meats and drinks in the nature of remedies, to revive and refreſh the drooping ſpirits, and give new life and vigour to the whole. But then we muſt uſe them ſo as God intended; not to neglect or lay aſide our natural ſtrength and vigour, but only to aſſiſt nature when faint and drooping. We muſt not apply theſe remedies but when nature requires them, either when we are hungry and thirſty, or tired with thought and labour; nor muſt we apply them in larger proportions, than what will fairly anſwer the needs and neceſſities of nature. But if men out of luxury, or a deſire to pleaſe the appetite, to pamper the body, or to comply with cuſtom, and a habit of indulgence, will be continually refreſhing nature, when ſhe has no need, or overcharge her when ſhe has; this is a direct abuſe of God's bleſſings, clogs the ſpirits, inſtead of refreſhing them, and by uſing nature to ſuch needleſs aids, makes her loſe her own ſtrength, by craving a perpetual ſupply of artificial ſpirits; till by degrees men have no power to reſiſt the importunity of ſuch appetites, nor any life, any vigour left, but what they derive from thoſe falſe flames, which will quickly expire, and end in a fatal ſtupidity. This is the moſt wretched ſtate, into which man can ſink; and changes the human, into a brutal nature. For what is there, that more diſtinguiſhes men from brutes, than the government of the appetite; and when that is loſt, they

they are only beaſts in the ſhape of men; and yet ſo bewitching are the pleaſures of ſtate, and ſo eaſily are men's appetites corrupted, that with a little indulgence, they will inſenſibly ſink into this miſerable condition; and which nothing can prevent, but a ſerious regard to the real neceſſities of nature, uninfected by habit, together with ſtedfaſt reſolutions, to apply theſe refreſhments only when they are proper and needful; and in ſuch proportions as may make them a real refreſhment, and not a burden by exceſs.

Another end of eating and drinking, is to fit and prepare us for the buſineſs of that ſtation, in which God's providence hath placed us. For every man, high or low, rich or poor, hath ſome certain work or buſineſs to do in the world; and by the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, he affords us thoſe bleſſings, to enable us to perform theſe with comfort and ſucceſs; and therefore we ought to uſe and apply them in ſuch a manner, as may make them moſt ſubſervient to our daily buſineſs, calling, and profeſſion. And this we do when we make the ſeaſons of eating and drinking what they ought to be, only ſhort retreats from buſineſs, and not the buſineſs of life; when we take care in due time to return to the duties of our calling, and bring with us underſtanding and abilities, ſufficient to purſue it: And when we unbend our minds, which is ſometimes neceſſary, to let it be ſeldom, and without any mixture of exceſs. An enjoyment of the bleſſings of life within theſe rules, is truly a repairing of our ſtrength and ſpirits, and a real furtherance in our daily buſineſs; and being ſo, is a ſober and temperate uſe of our meats and drinks, and anſwers the end for which God gave them. But when theſe refreſhments are long and frequent, and conſume much time that might be otherwiſe uſefully and beneficially employed; when men have

no other aim in invigorating the ſpirits, by the liberal enjoyments of God's bleſſings, but to ſpend them in mirth and jollity; when ſo far from deſigning them as preparatives to buſineſs; they cannot bear to think of returning to buſineſs, or when their exceſſes have left them neither ſenſe nor reaſon to attend it; then is ſuch a conduct an irregular and ſinful abuſe of God's creatures.

And this intolerable waſte of time is greatly aggravated by the expence of treaſure thereby occaſioned, which in the richer ſort is a defrauding of their indigent neighbours, who are to partake of their ſuperfluous wealth; and in the poorer ſort, is the robbing of their own needy families, which ought to be their daily and immediate care. And both rich and poor will find theſe no ſmall aggravations of the guilt of gluttony and drunkenneſs, when they come to render an account at the laſt day. Nor will it be any excuſe to ſay, they were unavoidably led to theſe exceſſes, by their concerns in the world; ſince was it not alſo their inclination, the buſineſs and the exceſs may be eaſily ſeparated, where there is a ſober virtuous mind. But inſtead of making this a pretence for their intemperance, they ſhould be very watchful againſt ſuch temptations, and earneſtly pray for God's grace, to be delivered therefrom. And if we duly attend to what has been obſerved, we ſhall be able to judge, not only what are the proper bounds of ſobriety and temperance, and when we exceed them; but alſo how great and heinous the guilt of that exceſs is, and how baſely we abuſe the bleſſings of God; in our forgetting their proper ends, by perverting them to purpoſes directly contrary thereto; in turning that to the deſtruction of life which God gave for the preſervation of it; in our making that the means of ſtupifying the ſpirits, by which he deſigned to raiſe and refreſh them; in transforming ourſelves

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into the ſtate of brutes by thoſe helps, which he beſtowed for the more vigorous diſcharge of the duties of rational creatures; and in making that the occaſion of indiſpoſing us for the buſineſs of life, which God graciouſly gives to ſupport us under it. Such is the ſinfulneſs of an inordinate uſe of meats and drinks in itſelf, as it perverts the true ends of the bleſſings of God, and is a ſhameful abuſe of human nature. I ſhall now proceed to conſider the ſad effects and bad conſequences of this ſin.

Every ſin is in ſome reſpect contrary to us. Some ſins are hurtful to our bodies, others to our ſouls. Some waſte our fortunes, others ruin our reputation. Some are very bad in their own nature, and others are attended with fatal conſequences. But the ſin of drunkenneſs is equally hurtful to ſoul and body; it is as bad in itſelf, as in its conſequences; and has an ill influence on human ſociety in general, and on thoſe who are guilty of it in particular. Was I to deſcribe all the ill characters of this vice, the deſcription would be ſo frightful and ſurprizing, that one would really wonder how it is poſſible, that human nature ſhould ſink into ſo baſe and infamous, ſo hurtful and deſperate a vice? For nothing ſo much wears the body, waſtes the life and ſtrength of man, as drunkenneſs. It fires the blood, weakens the ſtomach, and often puts a ſpeedy end to life, by fevers, ſad diſeaſes, or other fatal accidents, to which a man is then expoſed; and where a conſtitution is ſo ſtrong as to eſcape this, yet the certain ſlow waſte that theſe diſorders bring, ſeldom ſuffer ſuch men to live out half their days. Gouts and other infirmities are ſevere reckonings, that they muſt pay for thoſe unruly liberties they have allowed themſelves. And hence ariſe many quarrels among men, whoſe paſſions being inflamed, while their reaſon is extinguiſhed, do often end fatally. This vice is the great corrupter of young perſons,

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who are drawn in and enſnared by the mirth and gaity that accompany it, and from hence proceed many irregularities. The wiſe man elegantly deſcribes this; "Who hath woe? who hath ſorrow? "who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who "hath wounds without cauſe? who hath redneſs of "eyes? they that tarry long at the wine. But at "the laſt it biteth like a ſerpent, it ſtingeth like an "adder. Thine eyes ſhall behold ſtrange women, "and thine heart ſhall utter perverſe things." Both ſwearing and lewdneſs are the ordinary effects of it. "Yea, thou ſhalt be as he that lieth down in the "midſt of the ſea, or as he that lieth upon the top "of the maſt." A drunken man being expoſed to ſo many dangers, which he can neither foreſee, nor prevent.

There is nothing that more waſtes a man's time and fortune than drunkenneſs. It makes him forget God, himſelf, and his neighbour. The time he ſhould employ for improving his mind, looking after his affairs, or doing good to others, is thrown away in thoſe brutal exceſſes; ſo that, as the wiſe man ſays, "The drunkard and the glut-"ton ſhall come to poverty, and drowſineſs (or "lazineſs) ſhall clothe a man with rags." That hard drinking inſenſibly brings on ſloth and great careleſſneſs; by which men firſt neglect, and then ruin their affairs, is too notorious, to require any proof. It alſo makes men remiſs in the concerns of their families, and wanting in all the reſpects due to their relations, friends or neighbours. But the worſt part of this vice appears in this, that our reaſon, and all the powers of our ſouls, fall under ſuch diſorders and unruly violences, that a man, while he is under the power of wine or ſtrong liquor, is transformed into a beaſt or madman. Our reaſon is the image of God, the glory of our nature, and the guide of our life: and God

has

has plentifully ſupplied us with meat and drink, that by theſe our bodies may be rendered capable to ſerve our minds. But when men abuſe theſe by exceſs, they not only waſte and miſapply the good creatures of God, but do alſo contradict the ends of nature, deprive themſelves of the free uſe of their reaſon, and which uſually produces in ſome, a ſpirit of rage, paſſion and cruelty; in others ſullenneſs, obſtinacy and ill nature; and in moſt, great folly and indecency in words and actions. Hence often proceed riots and exceſſes, ſwearing and railing, fighting and murder. And all theſe are ſo many aggravations of the ſin of immoderate drinking; and are ſuch as men know by their own repeated experience, to be the uſual effects of it. And thus, whereas the chief ſtudy of every wiſe and good man ought to be, to perfect his reaſon, and raiſe his nature to the higheſt pitch; a drunkard labours to debaſe and depreſs it all he poſſibly can.

Some men of ſtronger heads will perhaps think themſelves unconcerned in all this, becauſe being uſed to hard drinking, it has no viſible effect on them. But let ſuch ſeriouſly conſider theſe words; "Woe unto them that riſe up early in the morn-"ing, that they may follow ſtrong drink, that "continue until night, till wine inflames them? "—And woe unto them that are mighty to "drink wine, and men of ſtrength to mingle "ſtrong drink." Such men are generally the plagues of the places where they live, being the inſtruments of corrupting all about them, tempting them to waſte their ſtrength, to ruin their families and conſtitutions. Thus it appears that drunkenneſs carries with it a complication of evils, equally deſtructive to ſoul and body. But there is another ſpecies of intemperance, that ſeems not ſo criminal, becauſe not attended with ſo many fatal

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ſymptoms; I mean, thoſe who are not quite intoxicated, and therefore think themſelves free of the heavy charge that falls upon it; and yet habituate themſelves to drinking of wine or ſtrong liquor, when their bodies no way require it. Some think it a decent and hoſpitable way of entertaining friends to be frequently putting the glaſs about, without which they imagine converſation grows heavy, and that the maſter of the houſe is too frugal of his liquor. But beſides the waſte of time and of God's good creatures by means of ſuch tipling, an exceſſive heat is raiſed in the blood, which inſenſibly impairs nature, and brings on ſuch a habit, that they cannot refrain from drinking, and this in time corrupts their health, and enfeebles their minds.

To all theſe arguments againſt this vice, ariſing from the nature of our ſouls and bodies, there is another very ſtrong one, which the Chriſtian religion affords. When St. Paul reckons up the works of darkneſs, in which the Romans had lived while Heathens, which Chriſtians were obliged to avoid, he begins with this; "Let us walk honeſtly as in the "day; not in rioting and drunkenneſs; not in "ſtrife and envy." And the ſame apoſtle, comparing the goſpel to light, and heatheniſm to darkneſs, obſerves, "That they that be drunken are "drunken in the night; but let us who are of the "day be ſober." And our Saviour bids us "take "heed to yourſelves, leſt at any time your hearts "be overcharged with ſurfeiting and drunkenneſs, "and the cares of this life; and ſo that day come "upon us unawares." St. Paul alſo reckons drunkenneſs among the works of the fleſh, and ſays, "that thoſe who do ſuch things ſhall not "inherit the kingdom of God." Beſides what appears from theſe paſſages of ſcripture, there is a more general conſideration, which ſhews how contrary

trary this ſin is, to the ſpirit and deſign of the goſpel; which directs us "to mortify our bodies with its luſts and affections; to ſubdue our appetites, to crucify the old man, and to bring our bodies into ſubjection to our minds." The main deſign of the new teſtament, is to make us conſider ourſelves as pilgrims on earth, daily to remember that we muſt ſoon leave this world, and therefore ought to prepare for another. We are called upon to live after, and to walk according to the ſpirit; not to indulge our irregular appetites and deſires, but as far as our ſtate of health and life will permit, to deny all unneceſſary gratifications. Theſe are the rules, and this is the ſpirit of the goſpel; ſo that if we duly conſider things, we have arguments ſufficient to deter us from this ſin.

But what then muſt we think or ſay of our age, in which this corruption ſo univerſally prevails over all ranks and degrees of perſons, ſo that ſcarce any are to be found who have eſcaped it? Some of a more brutal kind, are overcome with the meer love of the liquor; tho' it be ſo ſhameful an exceſs, that no one will own it. Others know not how to diſpoſe of their time, being bred to nothing, and hardly capable of any thing. And becauſe of meer idleneſs, to get time off their hands, they run into theſe extravagancies, in which days and nights are ſpent. And yet no man can have been ſo neglected in his education, but that he may find ſomewhat to do if he will. He may and ought to look into his own affairs, and apply himſelf to ſome ſort of induſtry. He may find out ſome good company to converſe with, and ſome occaſions to do acts of kindneſs and charity to others; ſo that a man may, if he will, employ his time to many good purpoſes.

A pleaſant converſation is no doubt very agreeable, and to have it moderately enlivened and refreſhed,

freſhed with ſome generous liquor, can be no crime; but cannot men have mirth and be merry without being drunk or mad? Is there no meaſure to ſuch folly? It may therefore well be ſaid, that the end of ſuch mirth is madneſs. For to play with our health and life, our fortune and reputation, above all with our ſouls and eternity, is a madneſs beyond expreſſion; and yet theſe are the men who often pretend to wit and ſenſe: Some indeed are carried againſt their own inclination, meerly by ill example and cuſtom; till at laſt habit and practice make it familiar to them. But it is a ſtrange degree of perverſeneſs, that men will become a ſort of martyrs for their vices. They would think it extremely hard, were they obliged to endure ſo much in the practice of religion and virtue, as they ſuffer by the ſin of intemperance. But diſſolute habits do not change the nature of things. For tho' they may grow leſs ſhameful and reproachful, by being common, yet they are not the leſs evil. And that man muſt have a very weak mind, who is aſhamed of being wiſe and ſober, becauſe others are irregular and extravagant. Some there are, who think they cannot be hoſpitable and free-hearted without ſending their friends and ſervants home intoxicated. But this is a very unſuitable return of a civil viſit; to endeavour to deſtroy the health of him, who in kindneſs comes to ſee him, and perhaps to endanger his life in going home. The imputation of covetouſneſs, which ſome are afraid of, may eaſily be removed, by acts of charity to the poor, or generoſity to the afflicted and unfortunate. Theſe are noble inſtances of true goodneſs and largeneſs of ſoul, by which others are both benefited and relieved. Thus it appears, how weak all thoſe excuſes are, which theſe mad ſort of people make uſe of, to palliate ſuch an enormous practice.

And

And among the miſeries of this unhappy ſtate, it is none of the leaſt, that where an inordinate appetite reigns, reaſon and conſideration are ſhut out; and when men are deduced to ſuch a thoughtleſs condition, they generally go on without any ſenſe, either of their ſin or danger; and without any view beyond their preſent enjoyment. And nothing can awaken them out of this ſtupid ſtate, but a great reſolution, and ſerious reflection on the brutal condition, in which theſe indulgences have brought them; on the ſhameful abuſes of God's bleſſings, and their own rational faculties, in which it has betrayed them; and to what dreadful miſeries it will bring them at laſt. Theſe reflections imprinted on their hearts, may by God's bleſſing produce a happy change, and deliver them from their miſery and danger. For tho' cuſtom is very powerful, eſpecially in the preſent caſe, yet it has not force enough to make that neceſſary to nature, which is deſtructive of it, as all exceſs muſt be. But ſo far from this indulgence being neceſſary to life, that when a long courſe of intemperance has endangered it, the leaving that courſe is always the firſt preſcription, without which all other remedies are uſeleſs and ineffectual. So that what they call neceſſary to preſerve life, tends only to ſatisfy a craving and inordinate appetite; the gratifying of which is the direct and immediate means of deſtroying life. And it is therefore no wonder, that an indulgence, which has been long continued, ſhould be uneaſy under the firſt check or reſtraint. But if there be a ſteady reſolution to rſtrain the current of deſire, the appetite will, by degrees, grow more patient and quiet, and ſuch perſons will find more pleaſure in governing, than they ever did by indulging it.

Let then thoſe who have indulged themſelves in a habit of intemperance, ſtand ſtill and conſider, that they are in the worſt ſtate of ſlavery; a ſlavery of reaſon to appetite, of the human to the brutal part. Let them reſolve to aſſert the freedom and dignity of their nature, and if they have lived like beaſts, to die like men. Let them reflect how they have abuſed the bleſſings of God, to luxury and exceſs: With how much goodneſs he has borne their provocations, and waited for their amendment. And let a ſenſe of his mercy and their own vileneſs, produce in them that godly ſhame and ſorrow, which worketh repentance to ſalvation. But if neither the force of reaſon nor religion will prevail, let the terrors of the Lord perſuade them, not to continue in a courſe that muſt ſhortly end in their eternal deſtruction. If the work be difficult, it is alſo neceſſary; and let men conſider, whether they ſhall be uneaſy now, or miſerable for ever. The difficulty of the work ſhould excite their reſolution; and by conſtant prayers to God, he will ſtrengthen and aſſiſt them.

It muſt be owned, that the condition of ſuch a perſon, tho' not deſperate, is exceeding dangerous; and the more ſo, as there are but few inſtances of any who are reclaimed from it. And a ſtate ſo dangerous, ſhould be powerful warnings to others, not to be betrayed into the ſame kind of ſlavery, by luxury and indulgence. The only way to avoid the danger, is at firſt to govern and reſtrain the appetite, to keep under the body, and bring it into ſubjection. Such reſtraints and ſelf-denials are a neceſſary means to preſerve and ſecure mens innocence, and keep them from falling into exceſs. So that the only way to be ſafe and innocent, is to keep an habitual guard and reſtraint upon the appetite, from a due ſenſe of the true ends and uſes of eating and drinking; of the great wickedneſs of abuſ-

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ing God's bleſſings, to the diſhonour of religion, to the ſhame and reproach of human nature; and of the unſpeakable danger and miſery of living and dying in habits of exceſs, both as to this world and the next. And with theſe conſiderations, there muſt be frequent and earneſt prayer to God, that he will preſerve upon their minds a lively ſenſe of theſe things, and mercifully afford ſuch ſupplies of grace and ſtrength, as will be needful to prevent thoſe evil habits, and effectually to reſtrain all ſuch acts of irregularity and exceſs, as naturally lead to them.

Diſcourſe LXXXVI. Abp. *Tillotſon.*

Of a RELIGIOUS FAST, and how to KEEP IT.

Zeck. vii. 5.

—When ye faſted and mourned, did ye at all faſt unto me, even unto me?

IN theſe words, God by his prophet expoſtulates with the people of the Jews, concerning their monthly faſts, whether they really deſerved that name, or were rather a mere ſhew and pretence of a religious faſt? "The word of the Lord came "unto me, ſaying, ſpeak unto all the people of the "land, and to the prieſts, ſaying, when ye faſted "and mourned in the fifth and ſeventh month, "even thoſe ſeventy years, did ye at all faſt unto "me, even unto me?" That is, did theſe faſts truly ſerve to any religious end and purpoſe? Did not the people content themſelves, with a mere external ſhew and performance, without any inward affliction and humiliation, towards a real repentance? Did they not ſtill go on in their ſins, and on theſe occaſions faſt for ſtrife, debate and oppreſſion, and were rather worſe than better, for faſting; and therefore God diſregarded them? For thus ſaith the Lord, "execute judgment, and ſhew mercy and compaſſion every man to his brother. Oppreſs not the widows nor the fatherleſs, the ſtranger nor the poor; and let none of you imagine miſchief againſt his brother in your heart. But they refuſed to hearken, and ſtopped their ears that they ſhould not hear; yea, they made their heart as an adamant

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ſtone, leſt they ſhould hear the law, and the words which the Lord of hoſts hath ſent by his ſpirit, in the former prophets; and therefore came great wrath from the Lord of hoſts;—and as he cried, and they would not hear, ſo they cried, and I would not hear, ſaith the Lord of hoſts." So that theſe outward ſolemnities of faſting and prayer, had nothing in them of a religious faſt. "Did ye "at all faſt unto me, even unto me?" They were ſenſible of God's judgments, but would not turn from their ſins, but perſiſted in their obſtinacy and diſobedience.

What God here, by the prophet Zechary, calls faſting unto him, the prophet Iſaiah calls, "the faſt which God hath choſen, and an acceptable day to the Lord. Wherefore have we faſted, ſay they, and thou ſeeſt not? wherefore have we afflicted our ſouls, and thou takeſt no knowledge? behold, ye faſt for ſtrife and debate, and to ſmite with the fiſt of wickedneſs: ye ſhall not faſt as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. Is it ſuch a faſt as I have choſen, a day for a man to afflict his ſoul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulruſh, and to ſpread ſackcloth and aſhes under him? wilt thou call this a faſt, and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are caſt out to thy houſe; when thou ſeeſt the naked, that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyſelf from thine own fleſh; then ſhall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy ſalvation ſhall ſpring forth ſpeedily; then ſhalt thou call, and the Lord ſhall anſwer, &c." From all which paſſages, we may eaſily underſtand, wherein theſe faſts of the Jews were defective; the fault in general, which God finds with them, was, that theſe ſolemnities did not ſerve any real end or purpoſe of religion, but failed in their main

deſign, which was a ſincere repentance and reformation of their lives; ſo that they were not acceptable, nor eſteemed as performed unto him. My preſent buſineſs ſhall be to conſider in general, what it is to keep a truly religious faſt unto God. And then ſhew what the duty is, which a ſolemn humiliation and repentance doth require from us.

A truly religious faſt conſiſts in theſe ſeveral particulars: in the afflicting our bodies by a ſtrict abſtinence, ſo as to make them proper inſtruments to forward and promote the grief and trouble of our minds; in an humble confeſſion of our ſins to God, with ſhame and confuſion of face, and an hearty contrition and ſorrow for them; in an earneſt deprecation of God's diſpleaſure, and humble ſupplications to him, to avert his judgments, and turn away his anger from us; in interceſſion with God, for ſuch ſpiritual and temporal bleſſings upon ourſelves and others, as are needful and convenient in giving alms and charity to the poor, that our humiliation and prayers may find acceptance with God. I do but mention theſe here, intending to conſider them more at large.

And a day of ſolemn humiliation and repentance both require from us, that we ſhould humble ourſelves before God, every one for his own perſonal ſins, whereby he hath provoked God, and encreaſed the publick guilt, by bringing down the judgments and vengeance of God upon the nation. Our humiliation and repentance ſhould begin with ourſelves, and our own ſins, becauſe repentance is to end in reformation; but a general reformation cannot be, without the reformation of particular perſons, which conſtitutes the generality. And this Solomon preſcribes as a true method of a national reformation, and the proper effects of a public humiliation and repentance. "If there be, ſays he, in the land, famine, peſtilence, blaſting, mildew, locuſt,

locuſt or caterpillar; or if an enemy beſiege them in the land of their cities; whatever plague or ſickneſs there be; what prayer and ſupplication ſoever be made by any man, or by all thy people Iſrael; who ſhall know every man the plague of "his own heart," and ſpread forth his hands towards this houſe: then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his way, whoſe heart thou knoweſt; for thou, even thou only, knoweſt the hearts of all the children of men; that they may fear thee all the days which they live in the land, which thou gaveſt to their fathers. So that in caſe of any publick judgment or calamity, the humiliation and repentance of a nation, muſt begin with particular perſons; who "ſhall know every man "the plague of his own heart." And they muſt be convinced of their perſonal ſins and tranſgreſſions, before God will hear the prayers, and forgive the ſins of a nation.

Becauſe we cannot confeſs and bewail our ſins, and repent of them, in the public congregation, more than in general; it would therefore be proper on the morning of the faſt-day, before we go to the public aſſembly, that we ſhould humble ourſelves before God, in our families and cloſets; confeſſing with ſhame and ſorrow all our particular ſins and offences, with the ſeveral aggravations of them, ſo far as we can remember them; and earneſtly beſeech God to pardon and forgive them, for his mercies ſake in Jeſus Chriſt. And when we return from church, we muſt again retire into our cloſets, to renew our repentance, and make moſt ſolemn and ſincere reſolutions, to reform what we have confeſſed and repented of. Theſe good reſolutions we ſhould eudeavour to confirm by ſerious conſideration, and hearty promiſes of better obedience, and a more conſcientious care of our lives

and actions, for the future. By this means, the great end of a ſolemn faſt and humiliation, will in ſome meaſure be attained; or otherwiſe, it will for the moſt part be loſt, in a confuſed general repentance, which commonly ends with the public aſſembly, without any real permanent effect upon particular perſons, who return with the ſame affection for their ſins as before, and a ſecret reſolution not to forſake them.

Thus it was with the people of the Jews; they had their ſolomn monthly faſts, in which they made a great ſhew of humiliation, by "hanging down "their heads, and ſpreading ſackcloth and aſhes;" but there was no inward change of their minds, no real reformation of their lives; but as ſoon as the public aſſembly was over, they turned every one to his former evil courſe. "I heard, ſays "God, but they ſpeak not aright; no man repent-"ed him of his wickedneſs, ſaying what have I "done? but they turned every one to his courſe, "as the horſe ruſheth into the battle." That is, they took not a right method for an effectual repentance. Tho' they humbled themſelves before God, and repented of the national ſins in general, yet they never reflected upon, they had no ſenſe of their own ſins in particular; without which there can be no true general repentance. "No man "repented of his wickedneſs, ſaying, what have I "done? but as ſoon as the public faſting and humiliation was over, "they turned every one to "his courſe, as the horſe ruſhes into the battle;" without any conſideration or ſenſe of danger. Again,

We ſhould on a faſt-day, heartily lament and bewail the ſins of others; eſpecially the great and crying ſins of the nation, committed by all ranks and orders of men, whereby the wrath and indignation of Almighty God, may be juſtly incenſed againſt

againſt us. It hath been the practice of good men in all ages, to be troubled and afflicted, and to mourn in ſecret for the ſins of others, as well as their own; as the prophet Jeremy did, for the obſtinacy and impenitency of the Jews. Says he, my ſoul ſhall weep in ſecret places for your pride, mine eyes ſhall weep ſore, and run down with tears, becauſe the Lord's flock is carried away captive. His book of lamentations is little elſe but a perpetual humiliation for the ſins of that people, and for the judgment of God, which he ſaw inflicted, or coming upon them. Holy David alſo, upon all occaſions, teſtifies his trouble and grief for the ſins of others; "rivers of tears, ſays he, run down mine eyes, be-"cauſe men keep not thy laws. I beheld the "tranſgreſſors, and was grieved, becauſe they kept "not thy word." How does Daniel alſo humble himſelf before God, and mourn in the name of all the people, for their great ſins? We have ſinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly; O Lord, righteouſneſs belongeth unto thee, but unto us confuſion of face, as at this day; to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, becauſe we have ſinned againſt thee. And with what trouble and confuſion does Ezra, on a ſolemn day of faſting, bewail the ſins of the people? I am aſhamed and bluſh, ſays he, to lift up my face to thee, my God; for our iniquities are increaſed over our heads, and our treſpaſſes are grown up to the heavens: ſince the ſins of our fathers, we have been in a great treſpaſs unto this day. And thus ought we, upon any day of faſting and humiliation, to ſet our ſins in order before us, with all their heinous aggravations; and to lament and bewail that general impiety and vice, which overſpreads the whole nation, thro' all ranks and degrees of men; both magiſtrates, miniſters and people, as I ſhall more particularly obſerve. And,

I.

1. As to the ſins of magiſtrates, and thoſe in authority; they who make laws for others, ought to ſee them executed, and to be themſelves ſtrict obſervers of them. And yet how few of theſe, whoſe duty it is to correct the vices and immoralities of others, that are examples of virtue themſelves? and therefore no wonder, that magiſtrates are ſo remiſs, in diſcountenancing vice and immorality, and putting the good laws, made againſt them, in execution. Such are thoſe againſt the profanation of the Lord's day, by ſecular buſineſs, vain ſports and paſtimes, which tend to take the minds of men off from all ſerious thoughts of God, and religion, and the meditations of another world: and which is yet much worſe, in profaning it by lewd and ſinful practices, which are at all times unlawful, but on that day are a double violation of God's law. And alſo by neglecting to puniſh ſuch as are guilty of profane ſwearing and curſing, for which the land mourns; and againſt drunkenneſs, adultery and fornication, which are ſo impudently committed among us. And to mention no more, by neglecting to proſecute the horrible ſin of murder, ſo frequently committed in our ſtreets, beyond the example of former ages, with that ſeverity and impartiality, which is neceſſary to free the nation, from the guilt of that abominable ſin, which cries ſo loud to heaven for vengeance. And yet magiſtrates are bound by oath, to put the laws in due execution againſt all theſe crimes, ſo far as they fall under their knowledge and cognizance.

2. The ſins of the miniſters who ſerve at God's altar and watch over the ſouls of men, which will be required at their hands, if they periſh thro' their neglect. No doubt we have a great number of faithful ſhepherds in the land, who watch over their flocks with great care and conſcience, remembring the

the account they muſt one day make. But yet how many fail in the faithful diſcharge of this high office; who take little or no care of the ſouls of men, by inſtructing them in the knowledge of religion, or ſhewing them the way to eternal happineſs, by an exemplary converſation: Nay, too many, even undermine the effect of their doctrine, by leading lives directly contrary to it; who by their wicked converſation, alienate their people from the church, and ſo render them an eaſy prey to the emiſſaries of Rome, or to any other ſect, that expreſſes a greater zeal for religion, or leads a more unblameable life than they do. For who will regard thoſe teachers, who ſhew by their lives and actions, that they themſelves do not believe their own doctrines? The good life and manners of the preacher, are the beſt eloquence, and have that power of perſuaſion, which no words can equal. Our Saviour lived as never man lived, ſo innocent, ſo uſeful, ſo exemplary a life; and this was what made him ſo powerful a preacher of righteouſneſs. Such a preacher, and ſuch a practice is every way fitted to reprove, perſuade, and reform mankind. And,

We cannot but ſee how our religion and church are beſet and endangered on every ſide; by the aſſaults of ſeducing ſpirits, and by our own heats and diviſions. Nor can it ever be ſufficiently lamented, that they whoſe particular charge and employment it is to preſerve men in our holy faith, and encourage them to a good life, ſhould for want of due inſtruction, or by the diſſolute profligate life of too many, and by inflaming our differences about leſſer things; that they ſhould have ſo great a hand in deſtroying religion, in promoting infidelity, in ſhewing ſuch a careleſs neglect and contempt of all religion. When the paſtors and guides of ſouls, by their ill conduct and management, have made the people

people almoſt indifferent, whether they have any religion or not; what can the end of theſe things be, but that the kingdom of God will be taken from us, and given to a nation, that will bring forth better fruit? If ever there be a public reformation among us, it muſt begin at the houſe of God. The miniſters of religion muſt lead on this work, and be more careful and conſcientious, in the diſcharge of that high and holy office, which is committed to them, by the great ſhepherd and biſhop of ſouls. We are now to conſider,

3. The ſins of the people, among whom there is an univerſal corruption and depravation of manners. Impiety and vice have ſo overſpread the nation, that we may apply the words of the prophet to ourſelves. "We are a ſinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a ſeed of evil-doers;—from the ſole of the foot, even to the head, there is no ſoundneſs in us, but wounds and bruiſes and putrifying ſores." We may juſtly ſtand amazed to conſider, how the God of all patience is provoked every day, and how long he hath borne with us: with our open profaneneſs and infidelity, our great immoralities and groſs hypocriſy, our inſolent contempt of religion; our moſt uncharitable and unchriſtian diviſions; our incorrigibleneſs under the judgments of God, which have been ſo ſeverely inflicted on theſe kingdoms, that the inhabitants thereof might learn righteouſneſs. So that we may ſay with Ezra, "and now, O God, what ſhall we ſay unto thee after this?" And may not God ſay to us as he did to the Jews, "ſhall I not viſit for theſe things, ſaith the Lord? and ſhall not my ſoul be avenged on ſuch a nation as this?" But I proceed to ſhew,

That another duty, which we are to perform upon a faſt-day, is earneſtly to deprecate God's diſpleaſure,

diſpleaſure, and make our humble ſupplications to him, that he would be graciouſly pleaſed to avert thoſe terrible judgments, which we may at any time have juſt cauſe to fear, will fall upon us; and that his fierce anger may be appeaſed and turned from us. This was what the people of God did on their faſt-days; "ſanctify a faſt, call a ſolemn aſſembly, let the prieſts, the miniſters of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them ſay, ſpare thy people, O Lord, and give not thy heritage to reproach, that the heathen ſhould rule over them. Then will the Lord be jealous for his land, and pity his people." And thus did Daniel humbly and earneſtly deprecate the diſpleaſure of God towards his people; begging of him to remove his judgments, and to turn away his anger from them. "O Lord, I beſeech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jeruſalem, thy holy mountain; becauſe for our ſins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jeruſalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us.—O my God, incline thine ear and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our deſolations, and the city which is called by thy name. For we do not preſent our ſupplications before thee, for our righteouſneſs, but for thy great mercy. O Lord hear, O Lord forgive, O Lord hearken and do; defer not for thine own ſake, O my God." And thus alſo ſhould we, upon ſuch ſolemn occaſions, cry mightily unto God, and with the greateſt importunity, deprecate thoſe terrible judgments, to which the great and innumerable ſins of this nation, have moſt juſtly expoſed us; humbly beſeeching him, not for our righteouſneſs, but for his own infinite mercy, for his own name ſake, ane becauſe we are his people, and his holy truth and religion are profeſſed among us; that he

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would be pleaſed to hear our prayers and ſupplications, which we have made before him, for the Lord's ſake.

But our faſting and humiliation ſhould be accompanied with our alms and charity to the poor; we muſt "break off our ſins by righteouſneſs, "and our iniquities, by ſhewing mercy to the "poor; if it may be a lengthning of our tran-"quillity." If there be any way to prevent or remove the judgments of God, and to prolong the happineſs of prince and people, a ſincere repentance, and a great charity to the neceſſitous and diſtreſſed, are moſt likely to prevail with God, to reſpite the ruin of a ſinful people, and to forgive them. David, ſpeaking of the righteous or charitable man, aſſures us, that he "ſhall not "be afraid in the evil time, and in the days of "death he ſhall be ſatisfied." If we would have our prayers aſcend up to heaven, and find acceptance there, our alms muſt join with them. So the angel intimates to Cornelius, "thy prayers "and thine alms are gone up for a memorial "before God." And the prophet makes charity and alms a moſt eſſential part of a faſt. "Is it not, ſays he, to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor, that are caſt out, to thy houſe; when thou ſeeſt the naked, that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyſelf from thy own fleſh? then ſhalt thou call, and the Lord ſhall anſwer; thou ſhalt cry, and he ſhall ſay, here I am."

Laſtly, we ſhould proſecute our repentance and good reſolutions, till we have actually reformed and amended our lives. For in this, repentance chiefly conſiſts. The proper fruit and effect of all our humiliation and good reſolutions, is to forſake our ſins, and become better for the future; more pious and devout, more ſober and chaſte, more

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juſt and charitable, more humble and meek, more innocent and holy in all manner of converſation. Without this, all our faſting and humiliation, all our moſt earneſt prayers and ſupplications will ſignify nothing; either to ſave our own ſouls, or to preſerve this untoward generation, and perverſe nation. "If my people, ſays God, ſhall humble themſelves, and pray, and ſeek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear in heaven, and forgive their ſin, and heal their land." But if we will not hearken and obey, can we expect God to ſave us, only that we may ſin without fear the remainder of our days; what reaſon is there for God to preſerve our religion to us, when we will not ſuffer it to direct and govern our lives? If this be our caſe, what can we ſay, why the light of the glorious goſpel of Chriſt, which we have ſo long enjoyed, and ſo long rebelled againſt, ſhould not be utterly extinguiſhed, or removed from us?

It is much more agreeable to praiſe, than to reprove. But it muſt not be diſſembled, that the behaviour of too many in this place, and at the time of divine worſhip, is frequently ſo careleſs and irreverent, as ill become thoſe, who are then in the more immediate preſence of the great and glorious majeſty of heaven and earth. Could we be prevailed upon to demean ourſelves with that reverence, and to hear with that attention, which becomes the worſhip of Almighty God; it might then be hoped, we ſhould conſider what is ſaid. Conſideration would probably work conviction, which might produce in us a firm reſolution to perform, what we are inwardly convinced is both our duty and intereſt to do. Let us then obſerve our days of faſting, with full purpoſes of doing our duty; truly and earneſtly to repent of our paſt ſins, and to lead a new life for the future. Let us

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fear that great and terrible God, in whoſe preſence we have been to humble ourſelves, and turn to him, leſt we provoke him to puniſh us yet ſeven time more. Let every one of us with penitent Job, ſay unto God, "I have borne chaſtiſement. I will not offend any more; that which I ſee not, teach thou me; and if I have done iniquity, I will do ſo no more. Oh! that there was ſuch a heart in us, that it might be well with us, and with our children forever."

Diſcourſe LXXXVII. Abp. *Sharpe.*

The GREAT DUTY of DOING GOOD.

Eccleſ. iii. 12.

I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice and to do good in his life.

THE book of Eccleſiaſtes informs us of the ſeveral experiments Solomon had made, to diſcover wherein the happineſs of this world conſiſts. No man had ever greater opportunities to find out the way to contentment, or was more induſtrious to apply himſelf with an unuſual liberty, to enjoy ſuch things as are moſt commonly admired, than Solomon; and yet after all his induſtry and enjoyments, he found nothing but emptineſs and diſſatisfaction. He thought to have been happy, by the ſtudy of philoſophy; but on trial, he declared it to be vanity and vexation of ſpirit. He applied his mind to political wiſdom and other knowledge, in which he was more ſucceſsful than any before him; yet he confeſſes, that in "wiſdom "was much grief, and he that increaſeth know-"ledge, increaſeth ſorrow." He indulged himſelf with mirth and wine, and all ſorts of ſenſual pleaſure, but ſo far from receiving ſatisfaction therein, he ſaid of "laughter, it is mad; and of mirth, "what doth it?" He tried what pomp and magnificence would do; for he built ſtately houſes, and made him gardens and vineyards, or hards, and fountains. He encreaſed his poſſeſſions, and "ga-"thered ſilver and gold, and the precious treaſures "of the kings, and of the provinces." He had a

vaſt retinue, and kept a moſt ſplendid court, and yet when he came "to look upon all the works "that his hands had wrought, and on the labour "that he had laboured to do, behold all was vanity, "and vexation of ſpirit, and there was no profit "under the ſun." Wherein then is there any ſatiſfaction, if not in theſe things? what is that good the ſons of men ſhould apply for, to live comfortably here? This Solomon reſolves, by ſaying, in the words of the text, "I know there is no good in them, "but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life." He had found by long experience, that all happineſs to be obtained from the good things of this life, is to rejoice in the enjoyment of what we have, and to do good to others, while we live.

Two things then Solomon here recommends to all who would live comfortably in this world; rejoicing, and doing good. As doing good in the order of nature goes before, and is the foundation of rejoicing, I ſhall firſt ſpeak of doing good, tho' it is laſt named. And there can be no true joy in the poſſeſſion, or uſe of any worldly bleſſings, unleſs we do ſome good with them; it is that which ſanctifies our other enjoyments, and makes them matter of rejoicings.

But where ſhall I begin to ſpeak, either of the obligations that lie on us, or of the benefits and advantages which accrue, by doing good in our lives? or where make an end? The ſubject is ſo copious, that the ſtudy of a whole life cannot exhauſt it; the more we conſider it, the more weighty arguments will preſent themſelves, to engage us in the practice; and the more we practiſe it, the more happy and bleſſed ſhall we be. For, to do good, is to act agreeably to the frame and make of our beings. It is to gratify thoſe inclinations and appetites, that are moſt ſtrongly rooted in

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our natures; ſuch as love and natural affection, pity and compaſſion, a deſire of friends, and a propenſity to unite in ſociety. All theſe are ſo many powerful incitements of nature, to put us on doing good offices one to another. To do good, is the end of all thoſe acquiſitions, talents, and advantages, with which God hath bleſſed us. If we do not ſo uſe and employ them, inſtead of being better, we are much the worſe for them. What will our wit and good humour, our reaſon and memory, our wiſdom and knowledge, our ſkill in arts, and dexterity in buſineſs, our wealth and greatneſs, our reputation and intereſt, ſignify, if they do not render us more uſeful and beneficial to others? The price and value of every worldly bleſſing conſiſts in the opportunity it affords of doing good. To do good, ſeems to be the foundation of all the laws of nature; by it the world is ſupported, and without it all would ſoon fall into confuſion. All other natural laws may poſſibly be reduced, and ultimately reſolved into this. The virtue or viciouſneſs of any action is to be taken in general, from the influence it hath, to promote or hinder the doing good. It is the great work for which we were ſent into the world; and no man lives here to any purpoſe, unleſs he is an inſtrument of doing good. Let our lives be ever ſo buſy, and full of action, yet if others receive no benefit from us, we ſhall be able to give no tolerable account of our time, ſince in effect it will be, as if we lived idle, and did nothing.

To do good, is of all ſervices the moſt acceptable to God, and which the ſcripture enforces on us, with the moſt earneſt and affectionate perſuaſives, the ſtrongeſt arguments, the greateſt promiſes, and the moſt dreadful threatnings. It is preferred before all ſacrifices and religious worſhip, ſtrictly ſo called; it is the beſt way of expreſſing our thankfulneſs

fulneſs to God for all his benefits, and of our love and devotion to him; it is what Moſes and the prophets make the ſum of the old law, Chriſt and his apoſtles the ſum of the new: and great reaſon there is, why it ſhould be ſo. For to do good, is to be moſt like God. It is what gives us the reſemblance of his nature and perfections. Perfect love and goodneſs is the very nature of God, the root of all his other attributes. Never was there an action or work performed by him, from the beginning of time to this moment, but was an expreſſion of his love, an inſtance of doing good; and if we will be the children of our heavenly father, we muſt do good to all, with the ſame univerſal extent, as he cauſes his ſun to ſhine on the world. Of this our bleſſed Saviour was a moſt illuſtrious example, and is what will render us moſt truly his diſciples. His whole life was ſpent in doing good; the great deſign of his coming from heaven, of what he ſaid, did, and ſuffered on earth, was to benefit others; and the character whereby his diſciples are to be diſtinguiſhed from others, is this, that "they love one another, as he hath "loved them;" ſo to love and do good, "as to lay "down their lives for their brethren." To do good, is our greateſt duty, intereſt, and advantage; no man can more effectually render his life happy and comfortable, in the ordinary courſe of things, let his circumſtances be what they will, than to do all poſſible good; and however this may ſeem only to reſpect others, yet whoever ſo acts, will find at laſt, that he moſt conſults his own benefit: For to do good, is the natural way to raiſe us friends, whoſe endeavours may contribute to promote our honeſt deſigns, to ſecure us in our proſperity, and relieve us under any evil, afflicting circumſtances. Such is the make and conſtitution of this world, that no man can ſubſiſt of himſelf,

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but he ſtands in continual need of others, for their comfortable ſociety, and neceſſary aſſiſtance in his affairs; and of all perſons, the good man, who makes it his buſineſs to oblige all, is moſt likely to find the trueſt and beſt friends.

To do good, is the beſt way to procure a good name and reputation; a thing very deſirable, and of ſingular advantage to a man's ſecular deſigns. It embalms a man's name, and tranſmits it with a grateful odour to poſterity. "The memory of a good "man ſhall be bleſſed." It is alſo the moſt certain and effectual means to procure God's bleſſing on our endeavours, and to entitle ourſelves to his more eſpecial care, and protection; ſo that let what will happen, the good man in all circumſtances and conditions, has the greateſt aſſurance, that all things ſhall go tolerably well with him, or at leaſt, that he ſhall never be miſerable. "Truſt in the "Lord, and be doing good, ſo ſhall thou dwell in "the land, and verily thou ſhalt be fed." To do good, is to entail a bleſſing on our children after us. "I have been young, and now am old (ſaith the "Pſalmiſt) yet ſaw I never the righteous, (that is, the "merciful and good man) forſaken, nor his ſeed beg-"ging his bread." Beſides all theſe advantages, to do good, is moſt to conſult our own peace, and to make the beſt proviſion poſſible for our pleaſure and delight. Dr. Hammond uſed to call charity, a piece of ſenſuality, and the great maſter of voluptouſneſs. Epicurus would confeſs, that it was not only more brave, but more pleaſant, to do kindneſs, than receive them; and every good man will certainly find it ſo: for as the exerciſe of charity and beneficence, is as truly a gratification of our natural inclinations and appetites, as any other action that cauſeth us pleaſure; ſo likewiſe is it a gratification of the higheſt and nobleſt appetites we have; which makes the delight ariſing

there from, the more exquiſite. And to do good, is alſo a permanent pleaſure; a pleaſure that will laſt as long as our lives; the memory of it will always be accompanied with delight and ſatisfaction, and the nearer we approach death, the more comfort it will afford us; which cannot be ſaid of other paſt enjoyments. Would we then treaſure up to ourſelves a ſtock of laſting peace and joy, to ſupport us in all conditions of life, and make eaſy our paſſage at our death, let us do all the good we can. Thus it appears, that "there is nothing "for a man," or that more concerns him in point of duty or happineſs, "than to do good in this life." I ſhall now endeavour particularly, to ſhew the ſeveral ways of doing good, by every perſon, though in the meaneſt circumſtances.

Many are convinced, that it is both their intereſt and duty, to be doing good in their lives; but then they complain and lament, that it is not in their power, they not having means or opportunities for it. To ſuch, I anſwer in general, that there is no condition ſo mean and deſpicable, but affords opportunities of doing good; there is neither old nor young, men nor women, rich nor poor, high nor low, learned nor unlearned, but in there ſphere may be uſeful to others, and prove inſtruments of much good in their generations. It is neceſſary there ſhould be variety of functions and callings, degrees and conditions; ſome to govern, others to be governed; ſome more conſpicuous, others more obſcure; and for all to have different gifts and talents; yet not one of theſe but either is or may be, as uſeful as any that belongs to ſociety. So that the eye cannot ſay to the hand, nor "the head to the feet, I have no need of you." But it being impoſſible to ſhew in how many particular reſpects, every individual perſon, is, or may be

be uſeful to the public, and do good in his life; I ſhall only repreſent ſo much as may be neceſſary under theſe general heads.

And none can want opportunities of doing good, who is in a capacity of performing any acts of mercy or charity, to the bodies or ſouls of men. The inſtances of doing good this way, are as infinite as the wants and neceſſities of mankind. To the bodies of men we do good, when we relieve and eaſe them under any outward preſſures, wants and neceſſities; ſuch as ſickneſs, poverty, hunger, nakedneſs, debts, impriſonment, or other outward afflictions; and this, whether it be done by our purſe, counſel and advice, or by our labour and pains. And there is none ſo mean, and inconſiderable, but has it in his power ſome of theſe ways, to benefit his poor neighbour. To the ſouls of men we do good, when we inſtruct the ignorant, ſatisfy the doubtful, eſtabliſh the weak, correct the erroneous, reform the wicked, reclaim them from vice, and bring them to wiſdom and ſobriety; all theſe are inſtances of charity to the ſouls of men, and whether our deſigns ſucceed or not, we ſhall be rewarded as thoſe who have done good in the world. Again,

All the acts of beneficence and kindneſs, civility and good-nature, are to be deemed inſtances of doing good. A man doth good, not only by acts of charity, but by ſhewing his reſpect and good will to all about him; by reconciling differences among neighbours, promoting peace, friendſhip and ſociety; by being generous, liberal and hoſpitable, according to his ability; by forgiving injuries; by being eaſy of acceſs, ſweet and obliging in his carriage, bearing with the infirmities of others; and in a word, by contributing all he can, to make the lives of others eaſy and comfortable. A man is doing good, when he uſes the acquaintance, friend-

ſhip, or intereſt, he has with others, to do that good, which his own circumſtances, or the want of opportunity will not permit to be done by himſelf: this is a conſiderable inſtance of doing good, however ſlight it may appear. He that does it, is a double benefactor, being not only an inſtrument of good, to thoſe for whom he aſks any kindneſs, or charity; but even to the benefactor himſelf, whom God will not leſs reward, for being excited by another. We alſo do good, by an honeſt, and diligent diſcharge of our calling and employment. There is no art, trade, place, or buſineſs, that we are bred to, and employed in, if a lawful one, but we may therein be of great uſe to the public; and by carefully minding, and fairly managing it, we may render ourſelves very profitable members of the commonwealth. And we do good in a private capacity, when we behave towards all, ſuitable to the relations wherein we ſtand obliged. For inſtance, when being ſubjects, we conſcientiouſly obey the laws, ſubmit to our governors, and promote the public peace, both of church and ſtate; when being maſters of families, we take care of thoſe under our charge, and ſufficiently provide for their ſouls and bodies; when being huſbands or wives, we faithfully diſcharge all conjugal duties; when being parents, we love our children, and "bring them up in the fear and "nurture of the Lord;" when being children, we "obey our parents in all things;" when being ſervants, "we do our work, in ſingleneſs of heart, not as "men-pleaſers, but as thoſe that account they have a "maſter in heaven;" when having contracted friendſhips, we are ſecret, faithful, and prudent, uſing our beſt endeavours to maintain and preſerve them; and the ſame as to all other relations in which we ſtand. Theſe things, however little they may appear, are a real good and benefit to mankind,

kind, and ſo neceſſary that there is no tolerably living without them. Laſtly, we may do a great deal of good, by our examples, in being to others patterns of piety and prudence, of diligence and induſtry, of peaceableneſs and loyalty, of humility, meekneſs, and temperance; every man who is eminent in virtue, his life will be as a conſtant ſermon to inſtruct the world, and himſelf as effectual a benefactor by his example, as others are by their counſels and exhortations. And theſe things conſidered, who among us is in ſuch deplorable circumſtances, as not to have ability, or opportunity to do good in his life? ſurely, a man muſt live in a deſart, and have no communication with any one, that cannot ſome of theſe ways be uſeful and beneficial to others. I ſhall now make ſome application of what has been ſaid.

And, ſince it appears, we are ſo highly concerned to do good, let us be perſuaded ſeriouſly, and heartily to put it in practice. Let us propoſe it to ourſelves, as the great buſineſs of our lives, and take all opportunities for it; ſo contrive and manage all our affairs, as to make them ſubſervient to this great work. Let this be the end of our getting riches, and the meaſure of expending them. To heap up riches only to be rich, or to ſquander them on our luſts, are equally intolerable; but to do good with them, is what will ſanctify the getting and ſpending them. Let this then direct us in our purſuit after knowledge, in our learning arts and ſciences, in the management of our trades, employments, and every deſign that is propoſed to us. Let the great enquiry be, to what good will theſe things tend? and how to render our deſigns and endeavours moſt uſeful to the world. Let this be our great rule in educating and providing for our children and relations. Let it be our firſt care to poſſeſs them with a deep ſenſe of the duty

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they owe the public; to furniſh them with ſuch qualities, as will render them uſeful members of it, and put them to ſuch profeſſions and employments, as they may exerciſe them to advantage. If we thus provide for them, however little we otherwiſe leave them, yet by the bleſſing of God it will be a good fortune. Let this deſign of doing good, influence our very offices of religion; when we ſupplicate the throne of grace, let us ever have the publick in mind, and reſolve if God beſtows on us the bleſſings we pray for, to employ them for the good of others. Let us ſeriouſly ſet ourſelves to do good, to lay aſide all ſelfiſh deſigns and narrowneſs of ſpirit, and with ardent love and charity, to promote the good of others, as well as our own.

If doing good is ſo neceſſary a duty, what muſt be ſaid to ſuch men, whoſe religion is made up of faith and knowledge of the goſpel myſteries, without any regard to charity and good works; who diſparage doing good, and eſteem it as a heathen virtue, a poor blind piece of morality, and no way uſeful to promote our ſalvation? But how contrary is this to the doctrine of Chriſt and his Apoſtles? And is it poſſible, that he who went about doing good, who made it his meat and drink, the buſineſs and employment of his life, ſhould not require it from us his followers? But we are often called "on to do good, to be rich in "good works, to have fervent charity; and alſo told, "that all faith, all knowledge of myſteries, all gifts "of prophecy and miracles, are nothing; but that "charity is all in all." And is it then poſſible, that doing good, ſhould be an inſignificant, unprofitable thing? I have ſaid enough to reprove the opinion of ſuch, and ſhall therefore proceed to conſider thoſe who acknowledge it their duty to do

do good, but yet think they may be religious, and ſerve God without it. If they are ſober in their lives, juſt in their dealings, and come to church at uſual times, this they imagine is religion enough to carry them to heaven; though all the while they are covetous and uncharitable, without bowels of pity and compaſſion; and make no uſe of their wealth, power, and intereſt, their labour, induſtry, and other talents committed to them, for doing good in the world. Now, though no man can determine what virtues, or degrees of them, are preciſely neceſſary to ſalvation, yet it is certain, that charity, and doing good, are qualities as neceſſary thereto, as any condition of the goſpel; and is what at the general judgment, we ſhall be examined about, and upon which our eternal ſtate will depend.

From hence we may learn, wherein the perfection of Chriſtianity conſiſts. It has been much diſputed, which is the moſt perfect life, either to ſerve God by following our employments, taking care of our families, doing good offices to our neighbours, and diſcharging all other public, and private duties; or to retire from the world, to quit all ſecular concernments, and devote ourſelves to prayer, meditation, and other religious exerciſes, ſo called. Among the Romaniſts, this laſt kind of life is ſo magnified, that none are worthy to be ſtiled religious perſons, but thoſe that cloyſter themſelves up in a monaſtery: but whatever excellence may be pretended in ſuch a courſe of life, its certain, that he ſerves God beſt, who is moſt ſerviceable to his generation. And no prayers, faſts or mortifications, are near ſo acceptable a ſacrifice to God, as to do good in our lives. It is true, ſuch a retired life is the moſt eaſy and ſafe, as being the leaſt expoſed to temptations; but where is the praiſe of ſuch a virtue? Virtue is then moſt glorious,

glorious, and will be moſt rewarded, when it meets with moſt trials and oppoſitions. If then we would ſhew true bravery of ſpirit, and true piety towards God, let us live, as did our Saviour and his apoſtles. Let us not fly temptations but overcome them; let us not ſit contemplating at home, when we can be uſeful and beneficial abroad; let us ſo order our devotions to God, as to make them a means of promoting our worldly affairs, and doing good among men; let us allow ourſelves fit time to retire and converſe with God; but let it be only to this end, that we may appear abroad more pleaſant, and better enabled to reſiſt temptations, and to be more readily diſpoſed to every good work. This will be to imitate and follow the example of Chriſt. This is a life more ſuitable to the genius of his religion, than retiring to cloyſters, and deſarts; and by ſuch a life, we ſhall "make "our light ſo ſhine before men, that they may ſee "our good works, and glorify our father which is "heaven."

Laſtly, if it is ſo neceſſary for every man to do good in his life, as hath been repreſented; how much to be reproved are they, who do no good till their death? who live uncharitable and uſeleſs to the world, till they come to die, and then think to attone for their paſt ſins, and neglect of this duty, by ſhewing ſome extraordinary bounty to the poor, or devoting ſome part of their eſtates to public or pious uſes. This to me appears, juſt like the putting off a man's repentance to his death-bed. That a man ſhould repent, though never ſo late, is abſolutely neceſſary, and ſo it is that he ſhould do good; but then the deferring either ſo long, robs a man of the praiſe and comfort he might otherwiſe expect here, and will greatly leſſen his rewards in heaven, ſhould his late deeds be accepted, of which he is abſolutely uncertain; and

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it muſt be a very great act of goodneſs and mercy in God, if he can obtain a pardon for a whole life of uncharitableneſs. Let us therefore labour and ſtudy to do good in our lives, and daily give evidences to the world of our kind and charitable diſpoſition, before we diſcover it in our laſt will and teſtament. If God hath bleſſed us with temporal good things, let us prudently diſtribute them in our life-time, when all will ſee it is voluntarily done, and not ſtay till we can keep it no longer; for that will deprive us of the credit of our good deeds, in the eſteem both of God and man.

I now proceed briefly to conſider the duty of rejoicing; by which is meant, a conſtant habit of joy and chearfulneſs, of being contented and well pleaſed, and free from thoſe anxieties, diſquietudes, and uncomfortable reflections, which too often make the lives of mankind miſerable. This is the perfection of rejoicing, the utmoſt degree of happineſs we are capable of here. And the way to arrive to it, is firſt, a great innocence and virtue, a behaviour ſo prudent, that our conſciences will not reproach us. "This (ſaith St. Paul) is our rejoic-"ing, the teſtimony of a good conſcience, that in "ſimplicity and godly ſincerity, I have had my "converſation in this world." It is in vain to expect any true ſolid joy, peace or contentment, without a hearty practice of all the duties of religion, and by which we manifeſt our ſincerity to God. Secondly, we muſt have a firm and ſolid perſuaſion of God's particular providence; a belief, that he not only diſpenſeth all events, even the moſt inconſiderable, but that his providence is guided by infinite wiſdom, and goodneſs, ſo that nothing happens, but what is for the beſt. If we firmly believe this, we ſhall not be ſolicitous for the future, nor diſcontented, tho' things fall out never ſo contrary to our expectations. The conſi-

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deration that all things are managed by an infinitely wiſe and good God, and which will at laſt prove for the beſt, is a moſt certain antidote againſt all trouble and uneaſineſs, that can on any occaſion happen to us. Thirdly, another requiſite, to procure and preſerve this continual chearfulneſs and rejoicing, is a frequent and fixed attention to the great rewards of the other world, which God hath promiſed to all who truly love, and endeavour to pleaſe him. This conſideration will contribute much to our rejoicing under the miſeries and afflictions of this life, to think that however adverſe our condition may be here, yet in a little time, we ſhall be moſt happy and glorious; and the worſe our circumſtances are in this world, the greater (if we are good) ſhall our happineſs be in the next; for theſe "light "afflictions, which are but for a moment, will pro-"cure us a far more exceeding weight of glory."

But there is another notion of rejoicing, namely, the free and comfortable enjoyment of the good things of this life, with which God hath bleſſed us, in oppoſition to a pinching penurious way of living. And Solomon in his book of Eccleſiaſtes, doth frequently recommend this way of rejoicing; and tells us, that "there is nothing better for a "man, than that he ſhould eat and drink, and "make his ſoul enjoy good in his labour, for it is "the gift of God." And there is a good reaſon for it, ſince to have a plentiful portion of the good things of life, and not the heart to uſe them for the enjoyment of ourſelves and friends, and to refreſh us under the troubles of life, is the utmoſt folly, and makes us as really poor and neceſſitous, as thoſe who want bread. When therefore we do rejoice, let us be careful not to exceed the bounds preſcribed to Chriſtians, namely, to avoid all exceſs, to uſe the creatures of God ſoberly and temperately, ſo as to give offence to none, nor "to make provi-

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" ſion for the fleſh, to fulfil the luſts thereof." Let us then make our humble acknowledgments, and return our hearty praiſes and thankſgivings to God, for all the good things he hath bleſſed us with; confeſſing that whatever we enjoy, is the effect of his free bounty and goodneſs. Let us remember to exerciſe our charity towards our indigent brethren, that they may rejoice as well as we; then ſhall we purſue the direction of the wiſe man, to rejoice and to do good.

Diſcourſe

Diſcourſe LXXXVIII. Dr. *Clarke.*

The great DUTY of univerſal LOVE and CHARITY.

1 John iv. 21.

And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his brother alſo.

THE end and deſign of religion, is to make men wiſer and better; to improve, exalt, and perfect their nature; to teach them to obey, love, and imitate God; to cauſe them to extend their love, goodneſs, and charity, to all their fellow-creatures, according to their ſeveral ſtations and abilities; to oblige them to govern the paſſions of their mind with moderation, and the appetites of their body with temperance. This is the chief end and deſign of true religion, and whoever acts contrary to theſe great rules, by wilfully diſhonouring God, by hating his brother, or abuſing, and corrupting himſelf, is either a falſe and hypocritical profeſſor of the truth, if he does theſe things in contradiction to the plain rules, and in defiance of the laws of religion; or elſe he profeſſes a falſe and corrupt religion. The church of Rome is therefore a falſe and corrupt religion; becauſe, as it diſhonours God, by mixing idolatry with divine worſhip; and gives men too much encouragement to corrupt themſelves, and to indulge their vicious

vicious inclinations and habits, by allowing them, through many ſuperſtitious rites, to reconcile a wicked life, with the hopes of heaven; ſo it particularly permits, and even requires men to hate and perſecute their brethren. And thoſe whom for the want of arguments of reaſon and truth, they cannot convince and bring over, they endeavour by violence and cruelty to root out and extirpate from among men; as if the religion of Chriſt was intended to diveſt men of common humanity, and the ſervice and glory of God could be really promoted by the deſtruction of mankind. One of the greateſt corruptions of an excellent inſtitution, is, when religion, inſtead of promoting the univerſal peace, happineſs and welfare of men, is made to authorize ſuch practices, the prevention whereof is the chief and great end for which any religion was inſtituted. Particular perſons, under the profeſſion of the beſt and pureſt religion, may be led away with ſome degrees of this ſpirit of error, thro' a falſe zeal, and miſtaken judgment. Thus the apoſtles themſelves were for calling fire from heaven upon the Samaritans, who refuſed to entertain our Saviour: But the Chriſtian religion itſelf, the pure and uncorrupted doctrine of our Saviour, is intirely oppoſite to this ſpirit; and teaches us nothing but love and peace, meekneſs and charity, patience and forbearance one towards another. "If "any man ſay, I love God, and hateth his brother, "he is a liar; for this commandment have we "from him, that he who loveth God love his bro-"ther alſo." It ſhall be my preſent buſineſs briefly to ſhew the great obligation which lies upon all men in general, conſidered as equals, to practiſe this excellent duty of love and meekneſs, patience and forbearance one towards another; and then I ſhall obſerve ſome of the moſt remarkable variations of this duty, ariſing from the different rela-

tions and circumſtances that men ſtand in one towards another.

As to the obligation which lies on men in general, to practiſe this great duty of univerſal love, meekneſs and charity; it is evident, that by the original order and conſtitution of nature, men are ſo made and framed, that they neceſſarily want one another's help and aſſiſtance for their mutual ſupport and preſervation. They cannot enjoy any comfort of life independently of each other; but are manifeſtly fitted by the frame of their nature, to live in communities. Society is abſolutely neceſſary for them, and the bond of all ſociety is mutual love, charity and friendſhip. In this reſpect all men ſtand on a level, all having the ſame natural wants and deſires, the ſame need of each other's aſſiſtance. Every man, as ſuch, is bound by the law of his nature and common humanity, to conſider himſelf as a part or member of that one univerſal body or community, which is made up of all mankind; to think himſelf born and ſent into the world on purpoſe to promote the public good and welfare of all his fellow-creatures; and conſequently is obliged to embrace them all with univerſal love, charity, and benevolence.

And as all men are obliged to this, by the neceſſary law and condition of their being, and by all the outward circumſtances of the preſent ſtate, wherein God has placed them; ſo they are alſo ſtrongly prompted to it, by the natural inclinations of their own minds, when not corrupted by the practice of vice. For by nature men are plainly diſpoſed to be kind, friendly, and willing to do good. Nothing is naturally more agreeable and pleaſant to the mind of men, than being helpful and beneficial one to another. And, did they not ſuffer covetouſneſs and revenge, or other fooliſh and abſurd paſſions unreaſonably to overrule this

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their natural diſpoſition; they would univerſally enjoy the happy fruits and effects of it. For even in the preſent moſt corrupt ſtate of the world, as far as their vices will permit, men ſtill deſire to keep up a general commerce and communication with each other; they love to encreaſe their dependencies, by multiplying affinities; to enlarge their friendſhips by mutual good offices; to eſtabliſh ſocieties by a communication of arts, labour and induſtry. And the only poſſible means of preſerving ſocieties in any tolerable and durable manner, being the practice of mutual love, univerſal charity, and benevolence; this plainly ſhews, what the direction and tendency of uncorrupted nature is. No man therefore without tranſgreſſing both the plain law of his being, and alſo acting contrary to the reaſon of his own mind, and the natural inclination of his uncorrupted affections, can willingly do any injury to any man: But every one is obliged for the public benefit, to endeavour to do good to all, and to love all men even as himſelf. And, upon what occaſion ſoever any miſunderſtandings or provocations may happen to ariſe, he ought immediately to endeavour to appeaſe theſe with gentleneſs, rather than exaſperate with retaliations; and put an end to all differences as ſoon as poſſible. By this means the world would become as happy as they can be in this ſtate of imperfection. And nothing hinders mankind from actually arriving at this degree of happineſs, but moſt perverſe and unreaſonable iniquity.

Nothing further is requiſite to attain this univerſal love and friendſhip, and all the happy effects and conſequences of it, than that men in all reſpects do to others, what they would reaſonably deſire in like circumſtances, ſhould be done to them. This is the true meaning of loving others as ourſelves; and this we are manifeſtly obliged to by the plaineſt equity, and cleareſt reaſon in the world. Every

man deſires, and thinks it highly reaſonable, that others ſhould deal with him, according to the rules of equity, humanity and friendſhip; that they ſhould be tender of his life, eſtate and reputation; that in matters of commerce, they ſhould treat him with juſtice, fairneſs and truth; that in things wherein he ſtands in need of their aſſiſtance, and has reaſon to expect it, they ſhould be willing to relieve him according to their power; that in caſe of ignorance or miſtake, they ſhould be ready to inform him; and where he has given any offence, to forgive him upon his deſire of reconciliation. This every man thinks reaſonable in his own caſe; and therefore is undeniably bound, to think it reaſonable alſo whenever it is another man's to expect the like for him; and if he does not act according to this judgment, he is manifeſtly guilty of great iniquity and unrighteouſneſs. For what is in itſelf fit and right to be done, every man's own conſcience plainly tells him; and whenever he gives himſelf time ſeriouſly to conſider and review his actions, it either applauds and commends him, for having anſwered the chief ends of his creation, and complied with the higheſt obligations of his nature, in endeavouring to promote the univerſal welfare and happineſs of mankind by the practice of truth and righteouſneſs, meekneſs, goodneſs, or charity; or elſe it cannot but ſecretly reproach and ſeverely condemn him, for having acted the contrary part. Which judgment of conſcience, however men may conceal from the world their ſenſe of its weight, in reſpect of their own actions, yet it always diſcovers itſelf, in the cenſures they paſs on the actions of others. For how much wickedneſs, uncharitableneſs, pride, or contention ſoever, men can overlook in themſelves, yet there is no man, where his own intereſt and paſſions are not concerned, but in judging of others, will rightly enough diſtinguiſh

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concerning the characters of perſons, and the true value of mens actions; he will give juſt applauſe and commendation to men of meek, peaceable and quiet ſpirits; ſuch as delight to do good, and to make all about them as eaſy and happy as they can; or, on the contrary, he will freely condemn the promoters of hatred, animoſity and contention. All which plainly ſhew, both what the law of our nature, and the original inclinations of our affections are, when not corrupted with the practice of vice.

And as all men are thus obliged by the neceſſary circumſtances and conditions of their being, and alſo by the original and natural inclinations of their own minds, to love and do good to each other, according to their ſeveral powers and abilities; ſo they are ſtill further and more ſtrictly obliged to the practice of the ſame duty, in imitation of the nature, and in obedience to the will and law of God. God himſelf is love, an infinite and inexhauſtible fountain of never-failing goodneſs; who being infinitely and eternally happy in the enjoyment of his own unſpeakable perfections, could have no other motive to create things at firſt, but only that he might communicate his goodneſs and happineſs to his creatures; and he continues to preſerve them on no other account but to do them good. And becauſe God does himſelf take delight in doing good; for the ſame reaſon it muſt neceſſarily be his will, that all reaſonable creatures ſhould imitate him in that excellent perfection; and by the practice of mutual love and charity, permit and aſſiſt each other, to enjoy in particular the ſeveral effects and bleſſings of the divine univerſal goodneſs. God cannot but be pleaſed with ſuch, as endeavour to conform themſelves to the likeneſs of his divine nature, and make it their buſineſs as far as they can, to promote the welfare and happineſs of all their fellow creatures; in

like manner as the love and goodneſs of God is extended univerſally to all men. He has given us noble powers and faculties on purpoſe to enable us to imitate him in the exerciſe of theſe excellent attributes. He has endued us with reaſon and underſtanding, to diſcern good and evil, that we might chooſe the one, and avoid the other. He has implanted in our minds ſuch affections and diſpoſitions, as naturally inclines us to be kind, friendly, and charitable. He has ſo framed our nature, ſo ordered the circumſtances of our preſent ſtate, as to make ſociety and friendſhip neceſſary to the ſupport and comfort of life; on purpoſe that we might practiſe theſe divine virtues. He has interwoven the intereſt of men, and made the happineſs of every individual to depend on the public welfare; that each having a ſenſe of his own wants and exigencies, might ſee the reaſonable neceſſity of making it his great buſineſs to do good to others. And we have no other way to expreſs ſo acceptably our love and gratitude to God, as by loving and doing good to our brethren. Thus much is clear even from the bare light of nature. But the Chriſtian religion carries our obligation to the practice of this excellent duty much higher. We are now obliged to love and do good to one another, not only by the ties of common humanity, as we are men, and of the ſame nature; but as brethren in a more peculiar and eminent manner: being all the children of God in Chriſt, all members of the ſame body, all partakers of the ſame ſpirit, all heirs of the ſame bleſſed hope of immortality. Wherefore, let us "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith "we are called with all lowlineſs and meekneſs, with "long-ſuffering, forbearing one another in love." Again, We Chriſtians have not only the example of God's love and goodneſs in general propoſed to our imitation, made known to us by right reaſon, the light

light of nature, and our own experience of that good providence, which preſides over all, and daily does good to the whole creation; but we have beſides God's goodneſs and loving kindneſs manifeſted to us in a more particular and extraordinary manner, in that ſingular inſtance of the world's redemption, by the death of his Son: which exceeding great and undeſerved mercy, as all our hopes of happineſs are founded upon it, ſhould lay us under the ſtrongeſt obligations, to be in ſome proportion, kind, merciful and charitable towards our brethren, as God has been infinitely good and merciful to us. To this the apoſtle exhorts us, "put on therefore as the "elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of "mercy, kindneſs, humbleneſs of mind, meek-"neſs, long ſuffering; forbearing one another, "and forgiving one another, if any man has a "quarrel againſt any; even as Chriſt forgave you, "ſo alſo do ye."

Laſtly, as we are Chriſtians, we are obliged to love and do good to each other; not only by our knowing in general, that it muſt be agreeable to the will of God, but as being the peculiar law and command of our Saviour; "a new command-"ment, ſaith he, I give unto you, that ye love "one another; as I have loved you, that ye alſo "love one another." And he makes it as the diſtinguiſhing mark and badge of his diſciples: "By this ſhall all men know that ye are my diſ-"ciples, if ye have love one towards another." He himſelf continually went about doing good, therein ſetting us an example. And the apoſtles declare, that univerſal love and charity is the end of the commandment, the principal deſign of our whole religion. That he that loveth his neighbour, hath fulfilled the law. And whoſoever wants this excellent virtue, all his other pretences of religion, and zeal for the ſervice of God, are declared to

be vain and of no eſteem. If any man ſay, I "love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; "and, tho' we ſpeak with the tongues of men and "angels, and have no charity, we are as ſounding "braſs or tinkling cymbals." That is, all our pretences to religion are falſe and empty. The reaſon why ſo particular a ſtreſs is laid on the duty of charity, is, becauſe it is that temper and diſpoſition of mind, which is the higheſt poſſible improvement and perfection of our rational nature: It is that which makes our ſouls like unto God, who is goodneſs itſelf: It is that which, in the nature of the thing, is of the laſt and utmoſt importance, as being naturally and neceſſarily the condition and ground both of our preſent and future happineſs: It is a qualification of mind, abſolutely neceſſary to make us capable of the ſight of God, and the happineſs of heaven. For we muſt be like God, if we will ſee him as he is. We muſt firſt attain that diſpoſition of mind, wherein the happineſs of heaven eſſentially conſiſts, before we can be partakers of life and glory. In a word, that frame of mind which inclines us to do good, and to take delight therein, is itſelf the temper and diſpoſition of happineſs; without which it is no more poſſible for a rational creature to be made happy, than it is to alter the nature and eſſence, the neceſſary, eternal reaſon and proportion of things. This is the plain and true reaſon, why love, charity and goodneſs are conſtantly preferred before all other virtues; as being the ultimate end and deſign of religion, and themſelves a principal and neceſſary ingredient of the joys of heaven. Almoſt every other virtue, gift and excellency whatſoever, are but as means to this end; and to be done away when that which is perfect is come. Hope is but the preſent expectation, and faith the firm belief, of thoſe things which ſhall hereafter be made manifeſt. And when that comes,

comes, theſe virtues, and all other gifts in order thereto, muſt of courſe ceaſe. "Whether there be "prophecies they ſhall fail; whether there be "tongues they ſhall ceaſe; whether there be "knowledge it ſhall vaniſh away; but charity "and goodneſs never fail." Theſe are diſpoſitions of mind which are begun in the virtues of this life, and compleated in the glory of the next; which will grow up with the improvements of our knowledge and virtue here, to a perfect unſpeakable happineſs in the enjoyments of the world to come.

And could any man who ſeriouſly conſiders theſe things, and was unacquainted with the practice of the world, believe it poſſible; that men who profeſſed that holy religion, which ſo plainly teaches this doctrine of peace, ſhould yet, directly contrary to the whole end and deſign of Chriſt's religion, ſo far indulge their paſſions, pride, covetouſneſs, and ambition; as not only to be the cauſe of envyings, ſtrifes and contentions, but even to make wars and fightings neceſſary among Chriſtians, to the infinite ſcandal of our moſt holy religion; in the ſight of Jews, Turks and Pagans, among whom "the name of God is blaſphemed thro' us?" Could we believe it poſſible, if it was not too manifeſt in experience, that men, who call themſelves Chriſtians, ſhould oppreſs, bite and devour one another, and yet not be afraid, they ſhould be conſumed one of another? And is it not ſtill much more abſurd, that religion itſelf, that the religion of Chriſt, the religion of peace and love, which was intended to reconcile men to God, and each other, ſhould be made the occaſion of hatred, animoſity and contention; nay, of the greateſt oppreſſions and moſt inhuman cruelties? in a word, that any pretences of religion ſhould produce in men that ſpirit, for the preventing whereof all religion was principally and ultimately intended?

tended? I ſhall conclude this head in the words of the apoſtle "Who is a wiſe man, and endued with knowledge among you, let him ſhew out of a good converſation, his works with meekneſs of wiſdom? But if ye have bitter envyings and ſtrife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not againſt the truth. This wiſdom deſcended not from above, but is earthly, ſenſual, deviliſh; for where envying and ſtrife is, there is confuſion and every evil work. But the wiſdom that is from above, is firſt pure, then peaceable, gentle and eaſy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits."

It remains to conſider briefly ſome of the principal variations of this great duty, ariſing from the different relations and circumſtances that men ſtand in, one towards another. And here the practice of this duty is diverſified as many ways, as there are different ſtations, circumſtances and conditions of men. And, in reſpect of our behaviour towards ſuperiors; the duty of univerſal love, is to expreſs itſelf in a willing, hearty and chearful obedience to the commands of thoſe whom God hath ſet over us; in delighting to promote their honour, and to encreaſe among men that duty and reſpect, which is due to authority; in thinking them that rule, well worthy of double honour; and in endeavouring to promote all the ends and deſigns of good government, the execution of wiſe and beneficial laws, the peace and proſperity of the public.

In reſpect of our behaviour towards inferiors; the duty of Chriſtian love conſiſts in being juſt, righteous and merciful; in readily relieving the neceſſities of thoſe that want; in delivering and vindicating the oppreſſed; in inſtructing the ignorant and thoſe that are in error; in reproving the wicked, and endeavouring by good example and advice, to bring

bring them to a better mind. In a word, to do all the good we can to the ſouls and bodies of men, in imitation of our Saviour, "who went about doing good."

And by how much the greater any man's power, riches, intereſt, or authority in the world is to do good; by ſo much the more glorious is he, in exerciſing and employing ſuch his power and intereſt to that excellent and noble end. And here is the true and immortal glory of princes, that as they repreſent God in the exercite of power and authority in the world, ſo they reſemble him in the application of that power, to the ends of virtue and goodneſs, in promoting the public happineſs of mankind. Power is not deſirable for its own ſake, any more than wiſdom and knowledge; but only for the ſake of that greater good, which it enables men to do in the world. And to abuſe power to the enſlaving and deſtroying mankind, and to the ſerving ſuch purpoſes, the preventing whereof is indeed the only good reaſon for which power is truly deſirable, is the greateſt weakneſs and abſurdity in the world. God is the ſupreme governor of the univerſe, entirely poſſeſſed of abſolute and uncontrolled power; yet he uſes it to no other end than to preſerve, ſupport, and to do good to all his creatures. He is good, and does good, and eſteems goodneſs his greateſt glory and perfection; as being the title by which he moſt delights to be deſcribed. True greatneſs therefore is to imitate God in this moſt glorious perfection of goodneſs. And thoſe whom he has endued with power and authority, to repreſent him on earth, are then moſt truly and illuſtriouſly his vicegerents, when they look upon a large extent of power, to be only a greater compaſs of doing good; when they imitate God, in being lovers and preſervers of mankind, and making

government a protection and ſecurity to all that live under it.

In reſpect of our behaviour towards our enemies, or thoſe who have done us any injury; the duty of univerſal love and charity, is, to ſhew forth itſelf in a willing and ready diſpoſition to forgive them, upon their repentance and deſire of reconciliation. "If thy brother treſpaſſes againſt thee, rebuke him; and if he repent forgive him; and if he treſpaſs againſt thee ſeven times in a day, and ſeven times a day turn again to thee, ſaying, I repent, thou ſhalt forgive him." This we Chriſtians are in a particular manner obliged to, by the example of God's much greater goodneſs and compaſſion towards us; for ſince God has forgiven us all our ten thouſand talents, nothing can be more reaſonable in the nature of the thing itſelf, than that we ſhould be moved by that example, freely to forgive one another our hundred pence; and to have compaſſion each on our fellow ſervants, as God has had pity on us. But beſides the reaſonableneſs of the thing itſelf, God has alſo made it the expreſs condition of our enjoying the benefit of his moſt gracious pardon. For our Saviour ſaith, "ſo likewiſe ſhall my heavenly father do alſo unto "you, if ye from your heart forgive not every "one his brother their treſpaſſes." And even in our daily prayer, we are directed to aſk forgiveneſs of God, only upon ſuch condition, and in ſuch manner, as we forgive one another our treſpaſſes. This is indeed ſuppoſing our enemies repentance; but ſhould they not repent, yet we are obliged to love and bleſs them, to pray for them, and take all opportunities of doing them good, after the example of our heavenly father, who doeth good, even to the evil and unthankful.

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Laſtly, in reſpect of the behaviour of good men, towards thoſe who either neglect or deſpiſe religion in general, or are ſo unhappy as to have embraced any dangerous errors; the duty of univerſal love and charity obliges us to endeavour by all the ways of gentleneſs, inſtruction, and reproof, to bring them to repentance and a better mind. Magiſtrates indeed, and thoſe who are placed in authority, may and ought to make uſe of puniſhment and ſeverity, towards thoſe who are guilty of ſuch crimes, as are deſtructive of human ſociety; and the ſtrict execution of good laws, is in that caſe an inſtance of the greateſt love and charity to the public. But otherwiſe, it is the duty of "a ſervant of the Lord not to ſtrive, but to be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient; in meekneſs inſtructing thoſe that oppoſe themſelves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. For the wrath of man worketh not the righteouſneſs of God." And our Saviour ſeverely condemns that ſpirit, which ſome of his diſciples diſcovered, when they deſired to call for fire from heaven upon the Samaritans, who refuſed to give him reception. Such perſons as are not yet come to a right ſenſe of religion in general, it is our duty to perſuade by reaſon and argument; to convince them of the being, attributes, and providence of God; of the neceſſity and infinite importance of religion; of the unalterable difference of good and evil; of the reaſonableneſs, excellency and poſitive evidence of the Chriſtian revelation. And thoſe who are ſo unhappy, as to be involved in any particular pernicious errors, it is our duty to inform, inſtruct, reprove, and by all Chriſtian means endeavour to bring them back, to the acknowledgment of the truth. Taking care above all things, to ſhew them by our good examples, and by the influence of truth upon our

lives;

lives; that we have no other deſign in endeavouring to convince them, but their and our own ſalvation. Remembering the apoſtles words, "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and "one do convert him; let him know, that he "which converteth a ſinner from the error of his "way, ſhall ſave a ſoul from death, and ſhall hide "a multitude of ſins."

Diſcourſe

Diſcourſe LXXXIX. Dr. *Goodman.*

The GOLDEN RULE, or LAW of EQUITY.

Mat. vii. 12.

Whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do unto you, do ye even unto them.

THERE never was any law, human or divine, that hath been more univerſally received and acknowledged, than this general rule or maxim of our Saviour. It hath been admired both by Jews, Gentiles and Chriſtians; by men of all ages, countries, ſects, qualities and conditions. The reaſon of it is as clear as the light, the date of it as ancient as mankind, and its obligation as laſting as the frame of human nature. For there neither is, nor ever was, a precept of any religion or inſtitution, ſo exactly calculated for the benefit of mankind, or for the maintaining of juſtice and equity, peace and love in the world, as this is. It may therefore be juſtly wondered at, that when all men ſo univerſally allow of ſuch a common principle of equity, that yet there ſhould be ſo much uneaſineſs and complaints in the world; ſuch frauds and injuſtice, oppreſſions and perſecutions, animoſities and differences. And ſurely this muſt proceed, either from mens acting inconſiſtently with themſelves, contradicting their avowed prineiples by their practices; or that they do not underſtand or ſufficiently conſider, the force and obligation of this rule. For this reaſon I will endeavour to rectify ſome miſtakes,

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by giving a brief and plain explication of this great law of nature, and of the goſpel.

For the better underſtanding this maxim or ſentence of our bleſſed Lord, we need only ſuppoſe, what no one can doubt or deny, that there is ſuch a principal within us, as ſelf-love; and which in itſelf, is both innocent, uſeful and neceſſary. God implanted this principle in us, for great and wiſe ends, partly to be a guard and preſervative of our beings, and to ſweeten life to us; but principally to be the foundation of all his laws, by which he governs us. For if we had no delight in ourſelves, no concern for our own welfare, it would be needleſs in God to propoſe laws to us, and to enforce them with the threatnings and promiſes of rewards and puniſhments.

In all other inſtances of our duty towards God, this principle of ſelf-love is only the motive of our obedience; but in this law of loving our neighbour, it is not only the motive, but alſo the rule and meaſure of our duty. So that here we have always a rule, how to behave in all our actions towards others. For God having made it our duty in general to love our neighbour as ourſelf; we need only turn our eye inward, and conſult our own hearts, and we are preſently inſtructed in all the particulars of that duty. This is a ſtandard, a conſtant oracle in our own boſoms, which can never fail us, if we act impartially; unleſs we can hate ourſelves, which is impoſſible. For if I give others the ſame meaſure I uſe to myſelf, who can complain? This is a rule plain and eaſy, full and certain, and always at hand. For it is only turning the tables, and ſuppoſing my caſe to be my neighbour's, or his mine, and the thing is ſettled. I may poſſibly envy my neighbour, which may tempt me to give a wrong judgment; but if I change the ſcales, and put him in my place, and myſelf in his, I ſhall

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ſoon act impartially; for tho' I may be prejudiced againſt him, yet I cannot be ſo againſt myſelf. It is alſo poſſible that my neighbour may unreaſonably deſire more than is fit; if ſo, let me conſider, what would be equal for me to deſire of him, and then render to him ſo much and no more. When men are in proſperity, they will too often contemn thoſe who are in adverſity; and perſons in adverſity are too apt to envy and cenſure thoſe in proſperity. But would we here turn the tables, and each ſuppoſe himſelf in the other's place, we ſhould ſoon perceive what is fit on both ſides. For was the rich man put in the ſcale of the poor, he would think it hard to be deſpiſed, becauſe of his poverty, or to impute his calamity to him, as a crime; but would think it juſt, for to be kindly and humanely treated in his adverſity. And would the poor man put himſelf in the rich man's place, he would certainly think, that tho' a rich man is not always wiſer or better than another, yet there is ſome reſpect due to his ſtation, and that he deſerves not to be called a proud man, only for keeping up his character. Thus would both judge and act in their own caſe, tho' they cannot diſcern it in another's. Hence we may obſerve the uſe of this principle of ſelf-love, and that we have a court of equity in our own boſoms always to appeal to.

The natural and univerſal equity of this rule will appear, by conſidering the actual equality of nature, and the poſſibility and probability of equality of condition in all men, one time or other. It is but fit and reaſonable, that we ſhould carry an even hand between ourſelves and others, becauſe our neighbour is properly ourſelves, we being all equal in nature; for whatever difference there may be in men's outward circumſtances, that is merely accidental, and when diveſted of theſe, all men are alike. All men have the ſame creator, and are equally related

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ſoon act impartially; for tho' I may be prejudiced againſt him, yet I cannot be ſo againſt myſelf. It is alſo poſſible that my neighbour may unreaſonably deſire more than is fit; if ſo, let me conſider, what would be equal for me to deſire of him, and then render to him ſo much and no more. When men are in proſperity, they will too often contemn thoſe who are in adverſity; and perſons in adverſity are too apt to envy and cenſure thoſe in proſperity. But would we here turn the tables, and each ſuppoſe himſelf in the other's place, we ſhould ſoon perceive what is fit on both ſides. For was the rich man put in the ſcale of the poor, he would think it hard to be deſpiſed, becauſe of his poverty, or to impute his calamity to him, as a crime; but would think it juſt, for to be kindly and humanely treated in his adverſity. And would the poor man put himſelf in the rich man's place, he would certainly think, that tho' a rich man is not always wiſer or better than another, yet there is ſome reſpect due to his ſtation, and that he deſerves not to be called a proud man, only for keeping up his character. Thus would both judge and act in their own caſe, tho' they cannot diſcern it in another's. Hence we may obſerve the uſe of this principle of ſelf-love, and that we have a court of equity in our own boſoms always to appeal to.

The natural and univerſal equity of this rule will appear, by conſidering the actual equality of nature, and the poſſibility and probability of equality of condition in all men, one time or other. It is but fit and reaſonable, that we ſhould carry an even hand between ourſelves and others, becauſe our neighbour is properly ourſelves, we being all equal in nature; for whatever difference there may be in men's outward circumſtances, that is merely accidental, and when diveſted of theſe, all men are alike. All men have the ſame creator, and are equally related

to God. All mens bodies were produced from the ſame earth, caſt in the ſame mould, are born and die alike. And as to their ſouls, they are alſo equal; all have the ſame divine image, the ſame faculties, and reaſon is the ſame throughout the world. And therefore to act by our neighbour as we would be dealt by ourſelves, is an univerſal and indiſpenſable law of juſtice. Beſides, there is a poſſibility, if not a probability, of the equality of all mens conditions and circumſtances one time or other. The rich may fall to poverty, and the poor may become rich. The man of dignity and power may be depreſſed, and the man of low degree may be exalted. Such changes are frequent, and he muſt be very vain and ſtupid, who conſiders not, that this may be his own caſe. And therefore he who is now in proſperity, ſhould be humble, modeſt and merciful towards his inferiors, and to all who are in affliction; and thoſe in adverſity ſhould entertain ſuch thoughts of thoſe above them, as they would like for others to have of them, when their condition happens to be changed. And he that doth not thus act, is neither juſt for the preſent, nor provident for the future. But however eaſy this rule may ſeem to be, yet it is moſt certain, that there are great and frequent miſtakes in the application of it. Some take it in ſo large a ſenſe, as to ſuperſede all other laws both divine and human; and others by reſtraining the deſign of it, make it no rule at all, unleſs to ſerve a turn. It will be therefore neceſſary to fix the juſt bounds, and limits of it, in order for the clearer explication of the text.

And it muſt be obſerved, that this rule before us, is only intended for the government of our actions towards men, and not as a meaſure of our duty towards God. And with reſpect to our neighbour, this maxim or ſentence is rather to be conſidered as a meaſure, than a law; that is, its uſe is rather to

preſcribe

preſcribe to us how much, than what we ſhould do; it is intended to direct us in the right diſcharge of ſuch actions towards our neighbour, as are known to be lawful; and not properly as a law to warrant what we are about to do. For otherwiſe, a common drunkard might juſtify his debauching other men into that beaſtly vice, under a pretence, that he doth no more than what he is content ſhould be done to him. And a laſcivious perſon, could he be allowed to defile his neighbour's bed, might perhaps be willing another ſhould do as much for him. And no doubt an expert cheat, would permit others to cheat him if they could, provided he might freely exerciſe his talent on them. But this maxim or rule doth not allow of evil actions, nor yet determine any to be good merely on the mutual inclinations of mens minds. For this would be to repeal all the laws of God and man, and under pretence of making every man a law to himſelf, he would become lawleſs; but it only preſcribes the meaſure of our actions, in things lawful and honeſt.

For inſtance; ſuppoſe I am deliberating how to behave towards my poor brother in adverſity, as to what relief I ought to afford him. Here the thing is certainly good and lawful, in general; and then this rule becomes neceſſary to direct me in the meaſure of my duty; for it informs me, that I ſhould act by this poor man, juſt as I would be dealt with by him, if his caſe was mine and mine his. But ſuppoſe I am deliberating about retaliating or revenging an injury done me; here I muſt have a law to juſtify me in revenging myſelf, before I can determine what meaſure of revenge I am to take. For I muſt be firſt ſure it is lawful for me to avenge myſelf, and that I do not uſurp God's prerogative, who hath ſaid, vengeance is mine. But then, we muſt not only be ſatisfied, that the mat-

ter of the action be in itſelf lawful, but alſo that it be ſuch, as I ſhould think was of right due, and belonging to me, was the caſe mine. For I am not bound to do to another all that is lawful, or all which I could wiſh he ſhould do to me; nor yet to refrain from doing to him, what I could wiſh he would not do to me. But I am both to do, and refrain from doing to him, all that which, after conſulting my own heart and conſcience, I ſhould think him bound to do, or refrain from doing to me in the like caſe.

For example; if I was in extreme poverty, when my neighbour was in great affluence and proſperity, no doubt I ſhould be eaſily tempted to wiſh, that out of his abundance, he would not only relieve my preſent urgent neceſſity, but alſo by a large and plentiful charity, entirely raiſe me out of my diſtreſſed condition. This I could wiſh in my own caſe, and no doubt it is lawful, for ſuch a rich man ſo to do, if he pleaſe; but yet I cannot think him bound to this, or that he is guilty of ſin, if he doth not. For I ſhould not think it a ſin in myſelf to do ſo by him, and therefore he is not obliged in duty to do thus by me. Again, it is certain, that any man would be loth to die as a malefactor, whatever his crime be; but it would be very abſurd to conclude from hence, that the magiſtrate ought to pardon me, or for me to ſay, that he is cruel in putting me to that death, which I have deſerved. For tho' I could wiſh for a pardon, and that it is in his power, yet he will not be guilty of ſin, if he do not pardon me; for my own heart cannot ſay, I was bound to do ſo in the like caſe, and therefore, according to the rule before us, I cannot pronounce that he ought to do it. Not therefore whatſoever I could honeſtly wiſh for from my neighbour, nor every thing that is lawful, is neceſſary for him to do to me; but only that, which

which I can reaſonably and impartially judge to be his duty towards me, and that becauſe I ſhould think it my duty towards him in the like caſe; this and no more I may juſtly expect from him, by this rule of equity.

But it is farther to be conſidered, that as all men are equal in nature, conſequently whatſoever treatment is due to one man, muſt be ſo to another; and therefore this rule is to govern all men, in all their actions and intercourſe, one with another, without reſpect of perſons, be their quality or condition what it will: this being founded in nature, antecedently to the ſeveral ranks and diſtinctions of men, the prince is as much obliged by it, as any private man. It is a rule to be obſerved by men of all countries and dominions, for all mankind are our neighbours. It obliges men of different religions, as well as thoſe of the ſame way of worſhip. Nay, an equitable behaviour is due to men of all perſuaſions; for their weakneſs, follies, or errors deſtroy not their natural right to an equitable treatment. No man can be ſo inconſiderable, or deſpicable, but he hath an intereſt in the common charity of Chriſtians. No man is ſo remote from his country, or ſo different from us in opinion, ſo weak in underſtanding, ſo vicious or ill tempered, but there is a common tie of equity between us and him, which nothing can forfeit, nor no power on earth diſpenſe with. And therefore thoſe who confine equity, juſtice, and charity to a party; that imagine they cannot wrong one who differs from them, that no faith is to be kept with hereticks, and the like; ſuch revive the very dregs of Judaiſm, and utterly deſtroy the great deſign of Chriſtianity, under an ignorant zeal for their own opinions. Again:

This paſſage of our Saviour was not intended to be a rule of retribution, or requital, but of kind-

neſs. It is not ſaid, do to other men, as they have done to you; but, as ye would they ſhould do to you; that is, we muſt be ſo inclined to do good offices to others, as not to ſtay till an obligation is laid upon us, and then requite it; but we muſt begin to be an example of kindneſs to one another, and ſo make the world better natured. The goſpel requires us, to love our enemies, to do good to them that hate and perſecute us. Not to be overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good. That is, by love, kindneſs, and beneficence, to melt men into good nature; and by ſo doing, we ſhall heap coals of fire on their heads. The temper of a Chriſtian is to do good without invitation, or perſuaſion; from the mere benignity of his nature, and a love of beneficence; and the proportion of that muſt be ſuch, as he would gladly meet with from others, was the caſe altered. I will now ſpecify ſome of the principal inſtances, to which this rule may be applied, and from whence will appear, the great influence it will have on human affairs.

Indeed the uſe of this maxim is ſo general, and the occaſions of having recourſe to it, ſo frequent, that experience only can ſhew its importance. The attending to this rule, would in a great meaſure prevent thoſe wars and bloodſhed, that cruelty and rapine, thoſe deſolations of countries and kingdoms, which are not more the infelicities, than the ſhame and reproach of mankind, and that almoſt deſtroys the diſtinction between man and beaſt. But is there no ſuch thing as a court of conſcience, or common equity? Is there no common law of reaſon? Are there no general bonds of human ſociety? Is there no ſuch univerſal rule, as to do as we would be done by? If there be, as we have ſhewn there is, then the conſideration of, and application to it, might end diſputes, without the um-

umpirage of the ſword; for princes when they put on the diadem do not put off the nature of men. And then it could not appear lawful, to involve whole nations in blood, on a punctilio of honour, or for their own glory, or for encreaſe of dominion, or to take advantage of inteſtine diviſions, the minority of a prince, the corruption of miniſters, or the like. But whoever examines his own court of conſcience, will readily acknowledge, that he would not be ſo dealt with himſelf, and therefore ought not to act ſo by others. And this court of equity is always open; written laws may be interrupted, but this is always in force.

But if princes and great ſtates will not be reſtrained by this law, yet ſurely it ſhould be of authority with private perſons, and be ſufficient to ſuppreſs duels, and ſhedding the blood of war in peace; which is a moſt ſavage cuſtom, and much worſe than war; becauſe between princes, there is no ſuperior court to appeal to for juſtice; but in this caſe, there is a remedy in human judicatures. How intolerable then is it, that my own life and my neighbours ſhould be put to the hazard of the ſword, on the ſlighteſt provocations; perhaps for a mere raſh word or jeſt, not worth the notice of a great mind, and which a wiſe man would deſpiſe? But if men conſulted their reaſon or conſcience, or any thing but their brutiſh paſſions, they would certainly make allowance for ſuch follies and inadvertencies in others; ſince they themſelves are not exempted therefrom. Beſides, would they like to anſwer with their lives, for every indiſcretion which they have been guilty of? Methinks, a man, eſpecially a Chriſtian, ſhould take a more noble revenge; I mean, to forgive the injury, and ſo be above his adverſary. This is the beſt way to triumph over him. For why ſhould I not oblige him by kindneſs, and heap coals of fire on his head, like a brave

Chriſtian, rather than like a beaſt, endeavour to kill him, only becauſe he may have done me ſome little injury?

The application of this rule to our practice, would tend much to the prevention of another great evil, namely, law-ſuits, which are uſually managed with as much malice and envy as war itſelf; to the great reproach of religion, and this nation in particular. Nor is only it the expence that is to be conſidered, but the inflaming of men's paſſions, the hindrance and ſcandal to religion, and the entailing of quarrels upon poſterity. Were theſe things fatally neceſſary and unavoidable, it would be endleſs to complain; but there is a remedy always at hand, would we make uſe of it. What, ſaith the apoſtle, is there not a wiſe man among you; no one that ſhould be able to judge between his brethren? Eſpecially, is there no ſuch thing as conſcience, or a court of equity? Is not the rule before us, ſufficient to determine quarrels? Would the plantiff put himſelf in the defendant's place, and he in the other's, both would eaſily know how to ſettle matters amicably. And the obſervation of this rule, would no leſs advance the intereſt and reputation of the Chriſtian church, than the quiet of the world; and prevent moſt of thoſe ſeverities, which Chriſtians too frequently uſe one towards another; each forgetting to do to others, as they would be done to themſelves.—By perſecution, religion is made odious, and loſes its principal glory of being rational; for men will ſuſpect that to be deſtitute of truth, which wants to be ſupported by force. To puniſh men for not believing as others do, is the way to prevent all ſtudy, all the improvement of mens underſtandings, and to ſupplant religion, by introducing hypocriſy, and an implicit faith. And yet this may be avoided, by a due application of the maxim before us. For theſe blind

zealots,

zealots, who are ever moſt forward in perſecution, tho' they have but little or no conſcience, yet cannot be without the principle of ſelf-love; and did they but turn the tables, and change the ſcale, they would ſoon diſcover the truth of things on both ſides.

For inſtance; ſuppoſe I would fain have another of my opinion, yet it would not become me to perſecute him, if he will not; becauſe turning the tables, I ſhould not be pleaſed to be ſo dealt with, in the like caſe; for I am no more infallible than he is; and he hath as much right to perſecute me into his opinion, as I have to force him into mine. But perhaps the way I am of is publickly eſtabliſhed, and reputed the moſt orthodox; be it ſo: yet if I look into myſelf, I ſhall find that I cannot be of what opinion I will. And was I heteredox, I ſhould think it hard to be forced to believe what another imagines to be orthodox; therefor ſuch uſage cannot be equal towards other men. Again, the framing ourſelves by this rule, "of doing as we "would be done to," would produce another temper and ſpirit among us, in the managing of religious diſputes and controverſies, whether in private conference, or public writings. The heats and paſſions, the perſonal reflections, and abuſive treatment of one another in theſe affairs, are become ſcandalous. A behaviour this utterly inconſiſtent with Chriſtianity, which requires, and produces, wherever it effectually prevails, the moſt mild, innocent, and dove-like temper; and is moſt peculiarly indecent, in ſo ſerious and ſolemn an affair as religion. And whoever conſults his own breaſt, would not be guilty of this to another, becauſe he would not like to be ſo treated himſelf. If my adverſary think otherwiſe than I do, yet I differ no more from him, than he doth from me. I am content he ſhould urge his reaſons againſt me, but I would

not

not have him pelt me with hard words, inſtead of arguments; therefore I ought not to do ſo by him. Let him reſt the point upon the merits of the cauſe, but not blemiſh my perſon or reputation. It is a ſign a perſon is deſtitute of good proof, when paſſion ſupplies the place of reaſon. I will not therefore uſe contemptuous reflections, ſly inſinuations, or malicious invectives againſt him, becauſe I think it unjuſt, that he ſhould do ſo by me. Beſides, if my cauſe be good, it wants not ſuch artifices; and if bad, this method will not mend it, but rather make my temper appear as bad as my cauſe.

The due conſideration of this maxim would cure another great evil, that of upbraiding one another with former follies and miſcarriages; a cuſtom moſt uncharitable and imprudent, fatally tending to obſtruct the reformation of others, and naturally rebounding on thoſe who practiſe it. For, firſt, it is diſingenious to reproach and upbraid men for thoſe follies and ſins they have repented of and forſaken. It is hard, that no time or merit ſhall efface human miſcarriages! that mortal ſinful men ſhould never forgive one another, who every day want forgiveneſs of Almighty God! and it is what almoſt invincibly tempts men to continue evil, becauſe they are made to deſpair of ever being believed to be good; ſo that hope is hereby entirely defeated. And yet who is there, that hath not been miſtaken in his youth; who hath not one time or other been tempted, ſurprized, or abuſed; who hath not had his prejudices of education, or been over-reached and impoſed upon, by artful cunning men? beſides, it is certain, that every man would be deſirous, to have a veil drawn over his errors and blemiſhes; that an act of oblivion ſhould paſs upon his former miſcarriages; and would think it very unjuſt, for others to charge him with the

opinions he hath abandoned, or upbraid him with the actions he hath repented of. He would gladly be taken for what he is, and not what he was. Therefore by the rule of equity, thus ſhould every man do by another.

And did we ſtrictly obſerve this one maxim, of doing as we would be done by, it would prevent all the frauds, cheatings and oppreſſions, that ſo abound in the world, and which no laws nor puniſhments can reſtrain. For this rule detects and convicts, condemns and ſhames men, at a bar, which no man can appeal from, or except againſt. Here will want no witneſſes, no inqueſt, no judge, but a man's own ſelf; and he that is faulty, his own conſcience will condemn him. No man who conſults this oracle, will find in his heart to oppreſs his neighbour by power and intereſt, with unjuſt law-ſuits, or baſe fraud; or take advantage of his weakneſs, ſimplicity, or neceſſity. This principle of ſelf-love ſticks cloſe to our nature, and is ever before our eyes; and if it be but applied as before obſerved, it will determine us to juſt and righteous, fair and candid dealings; for whatſoever I would not, that others ſhould do to me, that I muſt not do to them. I ſhall now make an inference or two from what has been ſaid.

And tho' this maxim is not properly a rule of religion towards God, but only the meaſure of our duty towards our neigbour; yet it is of ſo great authority, that without a peculiar regard to this rule, in our intercourſe with men, the moſt glorious pretences of piety towards God, will little avail. Men, by a mighty zeal about opinions, without regard to equity, juſtice and mercy, neither honour God, benefit the world, nor gain reputation to themſelves. To be devout in any form of worſhip, without honeſty and ingenuity in our dealings, is at the beſt but acting the part of a hypocrite,

pocrite, without any true notion, or ſenſe of religion. To profeſs and eſpouſe the beſt ſect and party that is, without an equal regard to this rule, will at leaſt be ſuſpected of mere knavery. He who neglects the weightier matters of faith, juſtice, and mercy, can have no pretence to Chriſtianity. God loves mercy more than ſacrifice, and is better pleaſed with our equitable dealing with our neighbour, than with the moſt coſtly oblations to himſelf. "Pure religion and undefiled before God, and the father, is to viſit the fatherleſs and widows in their affliction, &c." The Chriſtian religion requires of all its proſelytes, juſtice, mildneſs, clemency and equity. And certainly there is nothing like down-right honeſty, to give reputation to religion; this being a moſt popular argument to recommend it. But when men highly pretend to devotion, and yet appear diſingenuous and unjuſt, unmerciful and cruel, it muſt prove very injurious to religion. Again,

The obſerving this rule is ſo acceptable with God, that it ſeems the moſt effectual way to obtain ſucceſs in our prayers and addreſſes to him. For it is remarkable, that this maxim was delivered by our Saviour, on that very occaſion. After he had ſaid, "aſk, and it ſhall be given unto you," he adds, "therefore all things whatſoever ye would that men "ſhould do unto you; do ye even ſo unto them." And in the Lord's prayer we are taught to uſe this argument, "forgive us our treſpaſſes," becauſe, "we forgive them that treſpaſs againſt us. For, if we forgive not men their treſpaſſes, ſays our Saviour, neither will our heavenly father forgive ours." But whatever may be the advantages of obſerving this rule otherwiſe, a man will aſſuredly reap the fruit of inward peace, comfort and ſatisfaction in ſo doing; nor will any event of things diſcompoſe him; for whatever may happen, ſo long as he has been

been true to his own conſcience, this principle will ſecure him from the malice of men, from the fear and ſuſpicion of all evil. So that a retreat into a man's ſelf is the great refuge from troubles abroad; and the reflection upon a man's integrity in this point, is the principal conſolation in human life. With this holy Job comforted himſelf. He elegantly repreſents the great ſupport and comfort it afforded him in his adverſity, that he had in his proſperity dealt equitably, and mercifully, and conſidered other mens caſes as his own.

On the other ſide, it will be a ſad aggravation of our trouble, when adverſity befalls us, if we ſhall have cauſe to reflect, "that when I was in proſperity, I had no ſenſe of equity and humanity towards others, and now I muſt juſtly expect, that they will have as little for me, in my adverſity." And we may eaſily imagine, what a dreadful remorſe, and ſad agony Joſeph's brethren were in, when they came to reflect in their ſtraits, how unnaturally they had treated their brother? "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we ſaw the anguiſh of his ſoul, when he beſought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this diſtreſs come upon us." Since then we know not how ſoon it may be our turn, to be at the lower part of the wheel, we ſhould wiſely and prudently temper ourſelves with equity and moderation, whilſt we are uppermoſt, and ſo do to others, as at another time, we would wiſh and expect they ſhould do by us.

Diſcourſe XC. Abp. *Tillotſon.*

Of IMITATING the LIFE of CHRIST.

1 Peter ii. 21.

Leaving us an example, that ye ſhould follow his ſteps.

THOUGH the example of our Saviour is here propoſed to us on a particular occaſion, and with more eſpecial regard to the virtue of patience under unjuſt ſufferings, which ſo eminently appeared in our bleſſed Lord; yet the apoſtle does not limit this great pattern of all righteouſneſs, to the ſingle virtue of patience, but propoſes it to us, as an example of univerſal holineſs and goodneſs; for he ſo extends it, leaving us an example, that ye ſhould follow his ſteps, who did no ſin, neither was guile found in his mouth. In this latitude and extent, I ſhall conſider the life of our Saviour, as an example for our imitation. And,

The life of our bleſſed Lord is a moſt abſolute and perfect pattern of holineſs and godlineſs, as well as of patience under ſufferings; in imitating which there is no danger of error, no fear of miſcarriage. In the lives of the beſt of men recorded in ſcripture, we may diſcern ſome ſpeck, and blemiſh, ſome error, fall or ſlip; but the example of our Lord is a living law and rule, his precepts and pattern are of equal perfection, and the imitation of his life and actions, is the ſame thing, as obedience to his laws. For the life of Chriſt, was the life of God in the nature and likeneſs

likeneſs of man; he was God as well as man, and the divine nature muſt be a pattern of all perfection. As the ſon of God, he was the "brightneſs of his "father's glory, and the expreſs image and cha-"racter of his perſon." As the ſon of man, he had all the moral perfections belonging to human nature, excluſive of any evil inclinations, or ſinful frailties, but not without our natural infirmities; for he was ſubject to hunger and thirſt, wearineſs and pain like other men. And his human nature was aſſiſted in an extraordinary manner by the ſpirit of God above all the prophets and meſſengers of God, that were ever ſent to mankind; "he had no ſin, neither was "guile found in his mouth." And indeed it was requiſite, that he who "was manifeſted to take a-"way our ſins," and make expiation for them, ſhould himſelf be without ſin. We wanted an high-prieſt, "who was holy, harmleſs, and undefiled, "ſeparate from ſinners:" This was neceſſary both as an example, and to make expiation for ſin. And,

As the life of our bleſſed Saviour is a moſt perfect, ſo it is a familiar and eaſy example; an example of equal perfection with God himſelf, but more plain and level to us, as being adorned with the ſeveral virtues, that moſt frequently happen in human life. Nothing was ever more eaſy for common imitation, than his holy life; it was perfect innocency and goodneſs, and his deſign was to do whatever good he poſſibly could. This he purſued with the greateſt vigour and induſtry, courage and reſolution, diligence and ſerenity of mind. This was his meat and drink, his great buſineſs and delight, his life and happineſs. He had no affected ſingularities, no peculiar auſterities in habit or diet, different from common men; but his converſation was kind and innocent, free and familiar, to all perſons. He was a phyſician, and all mankind his patients;

patients; he did not place religion, like ſome ſince, in retirement from the world, ſhunning the converſation of men, and taking care to do no one good. Nor did it conſiſt in profound myſteries, and fine ſpeculations, but in the honeſt practice of ſolid virtue; in meekneſs and humility, kindneſs and charity, contentment and eaſineſs of mind, patience and ſubmiſſion to the will of God, under the greateſt afflictions, reproaches and ſufferings. And all this is level to every man's underſtanding, alſo eaſy to our practice and imitation; for it requires only an honeſt mind, due care and diligence to do what we know, to follow our guide in a plain way; and in all actions of our lives, to tread in thoſe ſteps, which the ſon of God, the beſt man that ever was, did walk in.

The life of our bleſſed Saviour is alſo an encouraging example. To ſee what God requires of us, performed by a man like ourſelves, gives great life to all good reſolutions and endeavours. Indeed he had many advantages above us, his humanity being ſo ſupported by the divine nature united to it, as to be free from ſin, and all vicious inclinations. But then we are to conſider, that God does not require perfect obedience, as the condition of our ſalvation and happineſs; but only ſincerity in obeying his laws, and to endeavour after greater perfection, which by God's grace is very poſſible, even in this imperfect ſtate; and his grace he hath aſſured us ſhall not be wanting, if we heartily and earneſtly beg it of him. Beſides, as Chriſt was the ſon of God, ſo are we in a lower degree, by grace and adoption, for the ſpirit of Chriſt dwells in us; and the ſame ſpirit which kept and preſerved him from all ſin, is equally able to mortify ſin in us, and to enable us to perform God's will in ſuch a manner, as he is pleaſed to accept to our juſtification. Laſtly,

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the life of Chriſt is an univerſal pattern; his example was calculated for all times and places, ſuited to all callings, conditions, and capacities of men; fitted for general direction and imitation, in all ſorts of goodneſs and virtue; and for this reaſon, he engaged himſelf in no particular calling or way of life, that his pattern might more equally and indifferently regard all mankind. For though he was a perſon moſt high in birth and dignity, being the only ſon of God, the maker and heir of all things; yet he ſubmitted to the loweſt condition of poverty and meanneſs, of contempt and ſufferings, in order to teach men of high degree to be humble and ſerviceable to others; and for ſuch as are in affliction, to be contented and chearful in the meaneſt condition, and hardeſt circumſtances. Tho' in "him were hid all the treaſures "of wiſdom and knowledge," yet he was not oſtentatious; he did not puzzle his hearers with abſtruſe ſpeculations and ſublime myſteries, but in a plain familiar way, inſtructed them in what was moſt uſeful and neceſſary to be known. Though he confounded the wiſdom of the wiſe, yet he condeſcended to the weakneſs and ignorance of the meaneſt capacity; herein "giving us an example to "follow his ſteps." Tho' he ſometime retired from company, to attend upon God, and meditate on heavenly things; yet moſt frequently he converſed with all ſorts of perſons, even publicans and ſinners, in order to reform and reclaim them from ſin, and to do what good he could. So that he was a pattern both of the contemplative and active life, and this to ſhew us how to mix both theſe to the greateſt advantage. But more particularly, the life of our bleſſed Saviour is a pattern to us, in the ſeveral following inſtances.

It is a pattern of the greateſt and moſt ſubſtantial virtues; of fervent piety and devotion towards

God; he often retired, and ſometimes ſpent whole nights in prayer; his diſcourſe was always either inſtructive in divine truths, or perſuaſive to holy living. Alſo of "ready and chearful obedience to "God's will;" he ſpeaks of it with pleaſure. "I "am come to do thy will, O God; he delighted "in it," and in no inſtance declined it; how difficult and diſpleaſing ſoever to fleſh and blood, and of perfect purity and innocency of life. The apoſtle tells us, "he was a lamb without ſpot and blemiſh, "he did no ſin, he was holy, harmleſs, undefiled, "ſeparate from ſinners, leaving us herein an ex-"ample," that though we cannot keep pace with him, yet "we ſhould follow his ſteps." Alſo of univerſal charity, taking all opportunities of doing what good he could, temporal and ſpiritual to all men; of which his whole life was one great and continued inſtance. And he that was ſo good to all, we need not doubt of his juſtice, had there been occaſion for it; but he had nothing to do with matters wherein juſtice is concerned, having no eſtate of his own, and he meddled not with thoſe of other men.

His life was a pattern of the moſt rare and unuſual virtues. His converſation was free and open, without guile and diſguiſe. This is no common virtue. Perfect ſincerity is a great foundation of goodneſs, it being ſoundneſs at the heart; but like perfect health, is ſeldom ſeen. He was alſo eminent in the unuſual virtue of humility, without affectation and ſecret pride. This appeared remarkable and natural in his whole life, which was a continued inſtance of it, and what he propoſes to our imitation; ſays he, "take my yoke upon you, "and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in ſpi-"rit." And St. Paul, "let this mind be in you which was in Chriſt Jeſus, who being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God,

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but made himſelf of no reputation (having emptied himſelf of majeſty and glory) and took upon him the form of a ſervant, and was made in the likeneſs of man; and being found in faſhion as a man, he humbled himſelf, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the croſs." Here was humility indeed! from ſo great a height, the top of glory and majeſty, to ſtoop ſo low as to the loweſt pitch of meanneſs and miſery. How ſhould this ſhame and confound the pride of the ſons of men, to ſee the ſon of God ſo humble! there is no virtue we have ſo much reaſon to imitate, and yet there is none we perform, with ſo little inclination. We know that we have no cauſe to be proud, for pride was not made for man, and therefore it no way becomes us; and yet we know not how to be humble. Let the example of our Lord's humility bring down the haughtineſs of men, let us conſider how he abaſed himſelf, and then become "vile in our own eyes, abhor our-"ſelves in duſt and aſhes." Again,

His contempt of the world, the enjoyment and pleaſures of it, was ſuch, that he had not ſo much as a ſettled abode and habitation; nay, he was in a more deſtitute condition than the brute creatures; for he himſelf tells us, "the foxes have holes, and "the birds of the air have neſts, but the ſon of man "hath not where to lay his head:" Not that he expects us to imitate him in this particular; for he might, and we may lawfully poſſeſs and enjoy the good things of life; but to teach us not to overprize them, not too earneſtly to ſeek, nor too inordinately to love them. That as he deſpiſed them, ſo we ſhould not admire and doat on them; as he poſſeſſed them not, ſo we ſhould not ſet our hearts and affections on them; and as he preferred doing good, to all this world's enjoyments, ſo we ſhould value temporal bleſſings, only in order to that

end. And his exceſſive kindneſs to us was ſuch, as men rarely ſhew to their beſt friends, or the beſt of men, and what no man ever ſhewed to his enemies; peradventure for a good man one would even dare to die, but in this was God's love manifeſted, that whilſt we were ſinners, Chriſt died for us. And this pattern of love our Saviour recommends to our imitation. This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you; greater love than this hath no man, that a man lays down his life for his friend." The higheſt pitch of human friendſhip that ever was, is to die for his friend. But our Lord died, not for his friends, but his enemies, that he might make them his friends, by gaining them to obey his laws; " ye are my friends, if ye do whatſoever " I command you." Here is a pattern of the higheſt and moſt unuſual love; not that every man by virtue of this example, is to lay down his life for another, it being impracticable; but that as Chriſt died for a common good, ſo we ought to bear that common affection to mankind, eſpecially to ſuch as are endeared to us, as to be ready by our ſingle life, if there is occaſion, to redeem the lives of many of our brethren, and expoſe ourſelves to ſave them.

The life of our bleſſed Saviour is alſo a pattern of ſuch virtues as are moſt uſeful and beneficial to others; in being ready to do good to all perſons, by inſtructing their ignorance, ſupplying their wants, ſpiritual and temporal; by reſolving their doubts, comforting them in trouble, healing their diſeaſes and infirmities; and what he did in methods miraculous and extraordinary, we muſt do by ordinary means, and ſuch as are in our power. He alſo uſed an unwearied diligence in this work; for daily he went about doing good; he took delight in this employment, he eſteemed it his happineſs, and a greater

greater felicity to confer, than to receive benefits; " he thought it more bleſſed to give, than to re- " ceive." No leſs remarkable was his condeſcenſion to others, in conſidering their weakneſs, and complying with them in lawful and indifferent things. St. Paul urgeth our Lord's example to Chriſtians, " we that are ſtrong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to pleaſe ourſelves. —For even Chriſt pleaſed not himſelf." Where we have liberty and can yield, we ought to abate of our own humour, for the good and edification of others; and not ſtiffly inſiſt on leſſer things, to the hindrance of greater good; even Chriſt pleaſed not himſelf. He who had all authority to command, who could not err, and had all right to be obeyed, yet condeſcended to the weakneſs and infirmities of others, and in things indifferent did not conſult his own inclination, but their intereſt and edification; and as what greatly conduceth to the benefit of all ſocieties, both civil and eccleſiaſtical, he gave us the example of an obedient and peaceable temper, conforming not only to divine but human laws, " giving to Cæſar the things " which are Cæſar's, and to God the things which " are God's;" inſomuch, that being poor and unable to pay tribute to Cæſar when demanded, he choſe rather to work a miracle, than appear diſobedient. And in religious concerns, as to the obſervance of days and times, he not only conformed to all divine inſtitutions, but to human appointments and uſage in things of an innocent, indifferent nature; with great prudence ſteering a middle courſe between ſuperſtition and faction, giving all Chriſtians herein a pattern, how to demean themſelves in like caſes, with great peaceableneſs and obedience. And our Lord not only gave us the example of a peaceable and uniting ſpirit, but bequeaths it as his laſt legacy; " peace " I leave with you, my peace I give unto you;" and

he prays, that God would preſerve this ſpirit of peace and unity among Chriſtians, to the end of the world. "Neither pray I for theſe alone, meaning his diſciples, but for them alſo which ſhall believe on me, through their word; that is, for all Chriſtians to the end of the world; that they all may be one, as thou father art in me, and I in thee, that they alſo may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou haſt ſent me."

And our Saviour is a pattern to us of ſuch virtues, as are moſt hard and difficult to be practiſed; ſuch as ſelf-denial, meekneſs, forgiveneſs of injuries, contentment, and patience under ſufferings. He denied his own life, and ſuffered whatever God pleaſed. "I came down from heaven, ſays he, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that ſent me:" he renounced his own will, in obedience to the will of God. And when nature declined thoſe dreadful ſufferings at the apprehenſion of their approaching; yet he conſidered his duty, and made his inclination ſubmit to it; ſaying, "O my father, if this cup may not paſs from me, except I drink it, thy will be done." That he might do good to mankind, he was contented to be eſteemed one of the worſt of men, to undergo reproach, to be called an impoſtor, a ſeducer of the people, a ſeditious perſon, and to be judged more worthy of death, than the greateſt malefactor. Thus was the ſon of God abaſed and vilified, that he might be a perfect pattern to us of this difficult virtue of ſelf-denial. Here is an example that hath both argument and encouragement to perſuade us to the like imitation. And was he who had ſo regular a will and inclination, contented to have it crucified and contradicted? Did he who had an unqueſtionable right to all the riches and enjoyments of the world, renounce them all, and embrace poverty? Did he, to whoſe deep wiſdom and judg-

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ment all mankind ought to ſubmit, condeſcend to the weakneſs of others, and not pleaſe himſelf? Did he, who never did any thing to ſtain or blemiſh his reputation, patiently bear all ſorts of ſlander and reproach? and ſhall we think much to deny ourſelves in any of theſe? ſuch an example is of greater force and authority than any precept. And if he thus denied himſelf, how ought we; ſince "the diſciple is not greater than his maſter, nor the "ſervant than his Lord?

Meekneſs is alſo a very difficult virtue, if we conſider the infirmity of human nature, and our frequent temptations to paſſion and anger. Moſes, the greateſt of all prophets, and the meekeſt man upon earth, fell into an irregular paſſion. But our bleſſed Lord, tho' perpetually aſſaulted with the higheſt provocations, always maintained a meek and even ſpirit. The dulneſs of his diſciples afforded a great trial of patience, yet his worſt words were, "O unwiſe and ſlow of heart to believe! how "long ſhall I ſuffer you?" When in the height of his ſorrow and trouble his diſciples fell aſleep, tho' he reproves their drowſineſs, yet he immediately excuſes it, "can ye not watch with me one hour? "the ſpirit indeed is willing, but the fleſh is weak." In all his actions he was perfectly meek and lowly of ſpirit, yet lived and died almoſt under continual provocations to anger and reſentment, not only from his friends and followers, but from all ſorts of perſons: for if the moſt ſpiteful reproaches and injurious uſage, the moſt cruel perſecutions and ſufferings; if the contradiction of ſinners whom he came to ſave; if their malice, joined to the greateſt ingratitude; if all theſe are provocations of a high nature, he was almoſt continually exerciſed with them; and yet under them all, he behaved with the utmoſt meekneſs, anſwering their bittereſt reproaches and moſt cruel uſage, either with calm reaſonings

or meek ſilence; that by the reaſonableneſs and meekneſs of his anſwers and carriage, he might convince or mollify them; and tho' it had little effect, yet this was his method to the laſt. And as the malice of his enemies was invincible, ſo was his meekneſs. When in the extremity of his ſufferings, the highprieſts and people reviled him, and inſulted over his miſery in a moſt barbarous manner; inſtead of rebuking them in anger, he prays to God on their behalf; "Father, forgive them, for they know "not what they do." And all this meekneſs and patience "he ſuffered, to leave us an example, "that we might follow his ſteps." And the ſame, as to his readineſs to forgive injuries. It is eaſy to give precepts of forgiveneſs, to bid "men love "their enemies, bleſs them that curſe, and do good "to them that hate them, and to forgive our bro-"ther," without ſtint or limit; but the practice is exceeding difficult. We find it hard to paſs by a little provocation, to ſuppreſs the thought of revenging a very ſmall affront and indignity offered us; but much more difficult is it, perfectly to forgive, to love our enemies, to pray for and do them good: and therefore our bleſſed Saviour not only enjoined us in our daily prayers, to beg mercy and forgiveneſs of God upon this only condition, that we forgive others; but to allure us more powerfully to the practice, he hath given us an example of it, in the whole courſe of his life. He forgave his enemies all their ill will towards him, all their vile and malicious uſage; and even at his death, when the provocations were greateſt and moſt violent, in the very agony and anguiſh of his ſuffering, he with his laſt breath declared his free forgiveneſs of them, his perfect charity to them, by his fervent prayer, "father, forgive them, they know not what they "do."

Another

Another virtue was his contentedneſs in a mean and poor condition. He was deſtitute of the neceſſary ſupports of life; he lived generally on the charity of others, and when that failed, he maintained himſelf by miracle; and yet always preſerved a conſtant evenneſs and ſerenity of mind, without anxious care, "what he ſhould eat, or drink, "or wherewithal to be clothed." He never murmured at the unequal providence of God, nor became diſcontented and envious at the plenty and proſperity of others; no man was ever poorer than he, yet no man ever more contented: which is not only an example of contentment to thoſe who are in the extremity of want, but to thoſe alſo, who are in better circumſtances. A narrow fortune is riches, in compariſon of none; a competency is plenty compared with poverty. If then the ſon of God, he, who was heir of all things, was deſtitute of all things, and yet contented to be ſo, ſhall we murmur and repine, if we are in the ſame circumſtances? therefore if the providence of God, ſhould ſee fit to reduce us to the loweſt condition of want, we have no reaſon for diſcontent; much leſs, if he affords us a competency.

The laſt virtue I ſhall inſtance, is patience under ſufferings, and reſignation to the will of God; and of this virtue, our Saviour was the greateſt example that ever was; his whole life, from his birth to his death, being made up of perſecution and patience; "never was any ſorrow like unto his ſor-"row, wherewith the Lord afflicted him in the day "of his fierce wrath." His patience was greater than any man's ever was, not only as he ſuffered more than any of the ſons of men, but becauſe he ſuffered without cauſe, being perfectly innocent, and free from the leaſt guilt; ſo that the greatneſs of our Lord's ſufferings, conſidered with his perfect inno-

innocency, gives his example a peculiar force and advantage above all others; and the apoſtle recommends it to us, as the moſt perfect and powerful. "Wherefore, ſeeing we alſo are encompaſſed about "with ſuch a cloud of witneſſes, let us run with "patience the race that is ſet before us, looking "unto Jeſus, the author and finiſher of our faith; "who for the joy that was ſet before him, endured the croſs, deſpiſing the ſhame. Conſider "him who endured ſuch contradiction of ſinners "againſt himſelf, leſt ye be weary and faint in "your minds." Such contradiction of ſinners; ſuch as no man ever endured; and yet he bore all this, not with a ſtoical and ſtupid inſenſibility, but with true patience. No man had greater apprehenſions, and a more tender ſenſe of ſuffering, than he had. He was poſſeſſed, not only of the more manly virtues of wiſdom, reſolution, and conſtancy; but even of the ſofter paſſions of human nature: meekneſs, compaſſion, grief, and a tender ſenſe of pain and ſuffering; "he took our infir-"mities, and bore our griefs." This he expreſſed in his agony in the garden, and by his behaviour on the croſs. He did not deſpiſe pain, but dreaded, and yet ſubmitted to it; he did not outbrave his ſufferings, but felt and endured them decently. He had a human ſenſe of them, but bore them with a divine patience and reſignation to the will of God, when he ſaw them coming; and during their continuance, he expreſſed a great ſenſe of pain, without the leaſt impatience. And herein he was a perfect pattern to mankind; not giving us an extravagant example of bravery, and ſturdy reſolution; but what was much better for us, of patient ſubmiſſion to the will of God, under a great ſenſe of ſuffering.—And now I will conclude all, with a few inferences.

Such

Such then is the example of our Lord's life, as to be calculated for all capacities and conditions, for the wiſe and the weak, the rich and the poor; perfect as is poſſible, yet obvious to common imitation, and fitted for the general direction of mankind, in all ſorts of virtue and goodneſs. A life pure, without any mixture of imperfection; humble without meanneſs of ſpirit; innocent without weakneſs. He was wiſe without cunning; conſtant in doing good, without oſtentation; virtuous without vanity; heroical without tranſport; a life even and of one tenor; quiet, without noiſe and tumult; always employed in the work of God, and in doing the greateſt benefit and advantage to men. And who would not write after a copy ſo perfect; and yet ſo familiar, ſo fit for our imitation? who would not be ambitious, to live the life of the ſon of God, when he was pleaſed to become and live as the ſon of man? This pattern now propoſed to us, is the example of one whom we ought to love and reverence above any: It is the example of our Lord and maſter, our ſovereign and ſaviour, the founder of our religion, the "author "and finiſher of our faith:" It is the example of our beſt friend, and greateſt benefactor; of him who laid down his life for us, and ſealed his love to us with his own blood. How powerfully then ſhould ſuch a pattern recommend goodneſs, kindneſs and compaſſion to us; who have received from it ſo much comfort and advantage? Had not the ſon of God commiſerated our caſe, pitied and relieved us in our wretched condition, we had been paſt all remedy, and extremely miſerable for ever. All the kindneſs, compaſſion, mercy, and forgiveneſs, which he would have us practiſe to others, he himſelf firſt exerciſed towards us. He that commands us to do good to others, was our great benefactor; he that requires us to forgive our enemies,

mies, ſhed his own blood to obtain forgiveneſs of our ſins; and while we were his enemies, he laid down his life for us, making himſelf the example of that goodneſs, he would have us ſhew unto others. And what remains, but this ſhort expoſtulation:

Are any of us reduced to poverty and want? Let us remember him, who, though Lord of all, had not where to lay his head; who being rich (in glory) for our ſakes became a beggar, that we through his poverty might be made rich. Are we perſecuted, or exerciſed with ſufferings and reproaches? Let us run with patience the race that is ſet before us, looking unto Jeſus, the author and finiſher of our faith; who for the joy that was ſet before him, endured the croſs, deſpiſing the ſhame. Are we diſcouraged in well doing? Let us conſider him who endured ſuch contradiction of ſinners againſt himſelf, leſt we are weary and faint in our minds. And if the ſon of God humbled, and emptied himſelf of all his glory, was deſpiſed and reviled of men, ought we to be puffed up with pride? Shall we be covetous and thirſt after the things of this world, when the ſon of God deſpiſed and trampled on them? Shall we ſlight and contemn the poor, or rather not eſteem them; when the ſon of God became mean and low for our ſakes; and whoſe indigent condition in the world hath made poverty, not only tolerable, but glorious? Can we be peeviſh, froward, and angry, on every little occaſion; when we conſider the meekneſs of the ſon of God, with what ſincerity and evenneſs of mind he behaved, under great and continual provocation? Shall we be diſcontented in any condition; when we conſider how contented the ſon of God was, in a ſtate the meaneſt and moſt deſtitute; how perfectly reſigned to the will of his heavenly father in all events?

events? Shall we ſeparate from the communion of the church of God, on pretence of ſomething we think amiſs, leſs pure and perfect, which always will be here; when the ſon of God lived and died in the communion of a church, guilty of great corruptions, both in doctrine and practice, ſuch as with no juſt reaſon can be objected to ours? Shall we reſent injuries, ſlanders, and calumnies ſo heinouſly, as to be out of all patience; when we conſider with what meekneſs of temper, and how undiſturbed, the ſon of God bore all theſe? Who when he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he ſuffered, he threatened not; but committed himſelf to him that judgeth righteouſly, and poſſeſſed his ſoul in patience. And do we expect to be better tteated than he was? If perfect innocence was contented to be traduced, and evil ſpoken of, to be ſlandered and perſecuted; ſhall we who are great and guilty ſinners, think to eſcape better, than one who was ſo infinitely good and perfect! "The ſervant is not greater than the Lord; and "if they have perſecuted me, (ſays our Saviour) "they will alſo perſecute you." Can we entertain thoughts of revenge, when we have ſuch a pattern before us, who poured out his blood for the expiation of the guilt of them that ſhed it; and ſpent his laſt breath in charitable prayers, for his betrayers and murderers? "Lord, endue us with the "like temper, but do not try us with the like ſuf-"ferings."

Thus by ſetting the example of our Lord before us, and keeping this pattern always in our eye, we may continually correct our own errors and defects, all the diſtempers of our minds, the faults and the irregularities of our lives; we may from ſuch an example be ſtrongly excited, and ſweetly led to the practice of virtue and goodneſs. And

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let us not be diſcouraged by the conſideration of our own weakneſs; for he who hath given us ſuch an example of virtue, will alſo give us, if we ſeek for it, his holy ſpirit to aſſiſt and enable us to conform ourſelves to this pattern of our Lord and maſter, and to follow the bleſſed ſteps of his moſt holy life.

Diſcourſe XCI. Abp. *Sharpe.*

CHARACTER of an UPRIGHT MAN.

Pſal. cxii. 4.

To the upright there ariſeth light in the darkneſs.

THIS pſalm ſeems to be an explication or paraphraſe on the words of St. Paul; "godlineſs hath the promiſe of this life, as well as of "that which is to come." And here we have a deſcription of the pious man, and of his bleſſedneſs in this life. His piety is deſcribed in the following terms: He is one who fears God, and delights in his commandment. He is righteous and upright in his converſation. He is prudent, and guides his affairs with diſcretion. He has a great ſenſe of God, on whom his heart is fixed, truſting in the Lord. He is charitable, gracious and full of compaſſion; he ſheweth favour and lendeth; he hath diſperſed and given to the poor.—His bleſſedneſs is thus repreſented; his poſterity ſhall be great and happy, his ſeed ſhall be mighty upon earth, the generation of the upright ſhall be bleſſed. His fortune ſhall be ample and plentiful; riches and plenteouſneſs ſhall be in his houſe. His fame and reputation ſhall be laſting, his righteouſneſs remaineth for ever, he ſhall be had in everlaſting remembrance. His honour, power and dignity ſhall excite the envy of the wicked; his horn ſhall be exalted with honour, the wicked ſhall ſee it and be grieved. Laſtly, he ſhall be ſafe and ſecure in trouble-

troubleſome times. To the upright there ariſeth light in the darkneſs. Such light ſhall ariſe to an upright man in evil times, as that he ſhall not be moved, neither ſhall he be afraid of evil tidings; for his heart is eſtabliſhed, and he ſhall not ſhrink, until he ſees his deſire upon his enemies; or, is delivered out of his diſtreſs.

Of theſe ſeveral characters aſcribed to a pious man, I ſhall recommend to your preſent conſideration his uprightneſs; and of the ſeveral inſtances of his bleſſedneſs, ſhall only obſerve thoſe of ſafety and ſecurity, in times perilous and troubleſome. To the upright there ariſeth light in the darkneſs. The character of the perſon to whom the promiſe of bleſſedneſs is made, is the upright man, or a man of honeſty and integrity. By uprightneſs is meant, the conformity of a man's mind to the eternal rules of righteouſneſs, and the agreement of his actions to the principles of his mind: ſo that, in general, an upright man is one who in all things follows the dictates of his conſcience, and makes his duty the rule of his actions. But the more lively to diſplay his amiable qualities to our imitation, it will be proper to conſider him more particularly with reſpect to God and men; both as to his religion, and his civil converſation.

A religious carriage towards God, is eſſentially neceſſary to uprightneſs. "He that walketh in up-"rightneſs, feareth the Lord." Take away religion and the fear of God, the foundation of uprightneſs is deſtroyed. He that hath no ſenſe of God and religion can never think himſelf bound to obſerve any rules in his actions and behaviour, but what are ſubſervient to his private, ſenſual and worldly intereſt; and conſequently whatever is inconſiſtent therewith, be it never ſo baſe, vile and injurious, he may act and execute without reſtraint, whenever a temptation offers; and yet think himſelf as innocent,

and his actions as commendable, as if he had been truly honeſt and virtuous.

He therefore that is an upright man, hath a ſerious and hearty ſenſe of God and religion on his mind, and is ever careful to preſerve and encreaſe it. But then he is not contented with a mere ſpeculative belief, an outward profeſſion of religious truths; but he has them ſo impreſſed on his heart, as to influence his whole life and converſation. He thinks it not ſufficient to be orthodox in his opinions, or a member of a true church; zealous in maintaining and promoting the right way; but he ſtrives to live as he believes, to practiſe ſuitably to the profeſſion he makes. As he holds faſt the form of godlineſs, ſo he is careful to expreſs the power of it, in an innocent, virtuous life. He takes not up his principles to advance his intereſt, or pleaſe a party; but he believes what appears true, and profeſſes it becauſe it is his duty. He neither chuſes his religion out of worldly conſiderations, nor leaves it on ſuch motives; but is reſolute and conſtant in bearing teſtimony to the truth, againſt all oppoſition. He is one who thinks religion too ſacred to be proſtituted to mean purpoſes; and therefore never uſes it as an inſtrument to ſerve any baſe end, tho' he was ſure thereby to compaſs his deſigns. He is a man who does not place his religion in outward forms and ſervices, but hath a nobler ſenſe of God than to think ſuch things are pleaſing to him: And therefore his principal concern is about the great indiſpenſable duties of Chriſtianity; "the weightier matters of the "law, juſtice, mercy and faith." He hath the everlaſting notions and differences of good and evil, deeply engraven in his heart; and how to practice the one and avoid the other, is his chief ſtudy. He endeavours uprightly and ſincerely to obſerve all God's commands; calls no ſin little, becauſe his temper inclines him to it; but at all times preſerves an uni-

form averſion to whatever is evil. He is an utter enemy to all factions in religion, and tho' he loves truth, is not leſs concerned for peace. He is better pleaſed with his charity to compoſe and reconcile religious differences, than with all his ſkill and abilities to diſpute them; for he knows that love is more acceptable to God, than a right opinion. Laſtly, he is religious without noiſe, and uſes no little arts to make his piety known. He ſeeks not the praiſe of men, but ſtudies only to approve himſelf to God; and is therefore as careful of his thoughts as of his actions. He fears God and regards his duty as much when no one ſees him, as if the eyes of all were upon him. Theſe are the great inſtances of uprightneſs as to religion. And whoever makes good theſe characters, may reaſonably conclude himſelf an honeſt man towards God, a true Iſraelite indeed, in whom there is no guile.

If we take a view of the upright man in his civil converſation, as to his carriage and demeanor towards men; it will be proper to conſider him as a private perſon, and a magiſtrate. As a private perſon, he will ſo frame and model his whole converſation, take ſuch a prudent and diligent care of himſelf, and his own good, as is conſiſtent with, and tends to promote the good and happineſs of others. He conſiders that every man has a right to be happy as well as himſelf; and ſince none can be ſo, without the aſſiſtance of others, he thinks it reaſonable that he ſhould contribute his endeavours towards it. Theſe being the main principles of his mind, he is careful that his actions and whole converſation are ſuitable thereto. He is therefore exactly juſt in all his dealings, not knowingly doing wrong or injury to any one, tho' he could gain ever ſo much, without being diſcovered. He is faithful to his truſt, never taking advantage of another's credulity, nor abuſing the confidence repoſed in him. He is a man of great

great candour, of ſweet and obliging behaviour; careful not to ſuffer by good-nature, and yet ready to be kind and aſſiſt others, unleſs attended with great inconvenience to himſelf; but what he once promiſes he punctually performs, tho' it be prejudicial to him. He is a man that loves, and is as tender of a good name and reputation as any one; but ſcorns to uſe any evil arts to procure or preſerve it. He hates mean and ſervile compliances, and will not ſpeak or act againſt the ſenſe of his own mind, to humour any man. Flattery and diſſimulation he abhors, envy and detraction he is above. He never leſſens another to make himſelf greater, nor repines at his neighbour's proſperity. He puts a fair conſtruction on men's words and actions, rather concealing a fault than report it worſe than it is. He hopes and thinks the beſt of all men, and does the moſt good he can. He is plain, free and open in his carriage; his words and thoughts always go together. Though he is watchful of opportunities to do himſelf good, and is careful to avoid dangers, yet he never uſes indirect means to benefit or ſecure himſelf. He ſcorns to take advantage of any man's neceſſities, nor will undermine another to effect his own deſigns. Deceit and colluſion are ſtrangers to his dealing. He eſteems a cunning intriguing man no better than a knave. In a word, all his deſigns are honeſt and juſt, ſuch as tend to the good of the community, as well as his own, but to no man's loſs and detriment; and the means he makes uſe of to obtain his deſigns are ſo fair, that he cares not who knows them. This is the man that is upright in his converſation towards men. The man that to the wiſdom of the ſerpent, joins the innocence and ſimplicity of the dove.

Thus much of the upright man, as a private perſon; let us now view him under a more conſpicuous character, and as a magiſtrate, intruſted with

the management of public affairs. And here we ſhall find him actuated by the ſame principles, and purſuing the ſame deſigns we have beforementioned; only his virtues, having another ſphere and object, require a different conſideration. The great thing he propoſes by accepting any office, is the glory of God and the public good; the honour and dignity of the place, and other worldly advantages are but ſecondary conſiderations with him. He ſtudies not to ingratiate himſelf with men, but to diſcharge a good conſcience. He has courage and reſolution to do what is fit, juſt, and conducive to the public good; not diſcouraged from his duty, by the menaces of the mighty, nor the murmurings of the multitude. He reſolves not haſtily, but maturely deliberates and conſiders before he determines. He does nothing precipitately, but impartially weighs what is repreſented to him. His ears are open to all parties; he debates without paſſion, prejudice or prepoſſeſſion. Neither profit nor friends can corrupt him, to act in matters of right, contrary to his inward ſenſe. His care and ſtudy is chiefly employed on the public. He is ever ſedulous to maintain the worſhip and ſervice of God, to defend and encourage true religion; to ſuppreſs vice and debauchery, impiety and irreligion. "He is a father to the poor, and the cauſe which he knoweth not, he ſearcheth out; he breaketh the jaws of the wicked, and plucketh the ſpoils out of his teeth." He ſtudiouſly endeavours to preſerve his allegiance to his prince, and his fidelity to the public; neither invading the rights of the one, nor injuring the liberties of the other. By his prudence and moderation he will endeavour to extinguiſh growing flames, and not add fuel to them; but will calm and allay mens jealouſies, rather than excite and encreaſe them. To conclude; he is a man that fears God, and honours the king, obeys the laws, and meddles

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not with them that are given to change.—I ſhall now proceed to repreſent the advantages and privileges, that an upright man enjoys in evil and dangerous times. "To the upright therefore there "ariſeth light in darkneſs." By darkneſs is here meant any kind of ſtreights, difficulties or adverſities. By light we are to underſtand either guidance and direction, ſafety and defence, or peace and joy, which ariſeth to the upright man. And

"To the upright man there ariſeth light in the "darkneſs," taking light for guidance and direction. Be the times never ſo dark, he hath this happineſs, that he is rarely at a loſs how to conduct himſelf. He of all others moſt eaſily ſees his way, it being plain, eaſy and ſtrait before him; but the ways of vice and wickedneſs are extremely rough and crooked. Whoever purſues evil deſigns, and is a ſlave to baſe affections, muſt neceſſarily be entangled in perpetual labyrinths; for having many different and inconſiſtent ends to purſue, he muſt unavoidably be often at a loſs how to behave himſelf. If he goes this way, then ſomething will be diſcovered which he ſtudiouſly endeavoured to conceal; if that way, then ſome man or party is diſobliged, whoſe intereſt he ſtood in need of; if he takes a third way, perhaps he then deſtroys his main deſign. Such difficulties and perplexities always attend the man of intrigue, and every one who walks not uprightly. But the contrary of this is the lot of the upright man. For he has only one end to purſue, and that is, to diſcharge a good conſcience. By this all his concerns are regulated; and of conſequence, he hath no claſhing of intereſts to perplex his deliberations; no little turns to be ſerved; all his reſolutions are eaſily made, and he avoids moſt of thoſe difficulties which entangle others. His counſels and methods are always the ſame, and he is never at a loſs to behave himſelf on any emergency. His way

is commonly ſo plain, that he requires little advice or inſtruction to find it. "The integrity of the "upright ſhall guide him, the path of the juſt is a "ſhining light." Again,

If he happens to fall into ſuch circumſtances, as to ſtand in need of great advice and deliberation, yet the upright man hath vaſtly the advantage of others. Becauſe he always enjoys the free uſe of his intellectual powers, can exert his reaſon to its higheſt perfection and greateſt advantage; Whereas the man who has ſiniſter ends to purſue, by indirect methods, is ſadly clouded in his diſcerning faculties, ſo as to hinder him from diſtinguiſhing rightly, whereby he commits many blunders and miſtakes. For whoever frames his mind by other meaſures than thoſe of honeſty and conſcience; whoever intemperately purſues his private ends, or is a ſlave to inordinate paſſions of any ſort; theſe things will ſo biaſs his ſoul, as to render him incapable of making a true judgment of what is right; and expoſe him to many dangerous errors in the management of his affairs, even in matters of little difficulty. But the upright man is not obnoxious to any of theſe inconveniencies; for having no turns to ſerve, but what are good and honeſt, nor no private affections or paſſions to be gratified; his conceptions of things are according to their nature, his determinations and reſolutions are reaſonable and proper, ſuch as become the occaſion. As his main deſign is to do in all inſtances what is beſt, ſo that preſerves him from miſtaking what is ſo. His reaſon and underſtanding are free and at liberty, and when any difficulty ariſes, he of all men is moſt likely to get out of it with eaſe.

And yet if we take light for ſafety and ſecurity, for defence and protection; an upright man in the worſt of times may, above all others, promiſe theſe things to himſelf; he that walketh uprightly walketh ſurely.

ſurely. And indeed this ſeems to be what is principally intended by the Pſalmiſt. The light here ſaid to "ariſe to the upright in darkneſs," chiefly reſpects his ſecurity from danger, in times of great calamity; as appears from what follows, "He ſhall not be moved forever; he ſhall not be "afraid of evil tidings, his heart ſhall not ſhrink, "till he ſees his deſire upon his enemies." And this ſecurity in times of danger the upright man may expect, becauſe uprightneſs doth in its own nature conduce thereto; and is what alſo intitles him to God's more particular protection. "As by "wickedneſs a city is overthrown, ſo by the bleſ-"ſing of the upright, it is exalted." Every upright man is really a benefactor to the public. And if any one can in reaſon hope to eſcape the violence and iniquity of bad times, the man of honeſty and integrity, he who is upright in all his ways, is the moſt likely to ſucceed therein; becauſe he of all others takes the ſureſt method to preſerve himſelf; he is leaſt obnoxious to the malice, envy, or rapine of open enemies, or pretended friends. So that uprightneſs and integrity is a ſhield and protection.

The upright man conducts himſelf in life with ſo much prudence, as to avoid thoſe rocks, on which others ſplit and are ruined. The deſtruction of men, even in the worſt of times, is generally to be imputed to themſelves; either to the careleſs neglect of their own affairs, the laviſhneſs and intemperance of their tongues, or to a buſy intermeddling with the concerns of others. Such things as theſe commonly bring misfortunes on men, and are the foundation of all thoſe ſtraits and difficulties with which they are entangled, even in times of the greateſt calamity. But the upright man in a great meaſure is free therefrom, becauſe his principles oblige him to act directly oppoſite. His ways are ſo univerſally approved, that none will offer

him an injury, leſt it tends to their own detriment As he endeavours to oblige all men, and by his conduct to make every one his friend, and none his enemies; ſo when any difficult circumſtances attend him, he will eaſily find thoſe who are ready to help and aſſiſt him. His converſation is ſo unexceptionable, his management of affairs ſo prudent, that thoſe who don't love him, will not eaſily find an occaſion to do him injury. Such as have no acquaintance with him, yet having a good eſteem for honeſty and uprightneſs in general, will be ready to afford him what aſſiſtance they can; from a natural ſenſe, that a good man ſhould be protected, becauſe his caſe and circumſtances may one day be their own. Even thoſe who have loſt all ſenſe of good and evil, yet in order to preſerve their credit and intereſt with mankind, will think themſelves obliged not to oppreſs an upright man.

But how ineffectual ſoever all human means may prove, to ſecure and preſerve an upright man, in evil times; yet he has ſtill an anchor more firm and ſtable to rely on, and which will not fail him; and that is the protection of God, and the care of his particular providence. Men may plot and deſign, order and contrive as they pleaſe, but ſtill God governs the world; and either blaſts their moſt fair and hopeful projects, or if he ſuffers them to ſucceed, turns them to what uſe and purpoſe he thinks beſt. And if God rules and diſpoſes all things, "ſo "that not a ſparrow falls to the ground, without his "will," in a more eſpecial manner doth he engage himſelf to take care of thoſe who walk uprightly before him. He hath promiſed to make "their righteouſneſs as clear as the light, and their juſt dealing as the noon-day: That they ſhall not be confounded in perilous times, and in the days of death they ſhall have enough: Tho' they fall they ſhall not be caſt down, for the Lord upholdeth them with his hand: That he will be their ſtrength in the time

time of trouble; he will ſtand by and ſave them from the ungodly, becauſe they put their truſt in him. It would be endleſs to produce the many paſſages in ſcripture to this purpoſe; I ſhall therefore only add that remarkable one, wherein the upright man, and his ſecurity in evil times, are deſcribed after a very particular manner. "He that "walketh righteouſly and ſpeaketh uprightly; that "deſpiſeth the gain of oppreſſions; that ſhaketh his "hands from holding of bribes; that ſtoppeth his "ears from hearing of blood; and ſhutteth his eyes "from ſeeing evil: He ſhall dwell on high; his "place of defence ſhall be the munitions of the "rocks; his bread ſhall be given him, his water "ſhall be ſure." That is, whoever walks uprightly, and makes a conſcience of his ways; ſuch a man ſhall be always under the watchful care and protection of the divine providence. For God will not ſuffer him to fall into any great diſtreſs; but will afford him ſuch a portion of temporal good things, as to render his life eaſy and ſupportable. Experience generally verifies the truth of this; honeſt and upright men, in the midſt of public calamities, for the moſt part eſcaping better than thoſe who are otherwiſe. Such, in their greateſt extremities, when no proſpect of deliverance from any human means have appeared, yet after a moſt ſtrange, extraordinary and unexpected manner, have met with ſuccour and relief. And thus attended by the ſpecial providence of God, they have never been miſerable, however ſometimes afflicted, and deprived of an ample fortune.

But it muſt be acknowledged, that tho' piety and uprightneſs have the promiſe of bleſſedneſs in this life, and which is generally made good; yet there are many inſtances to the contrary. God, for wiſe reaſons, may ſuffer an upright man to be oppreſſed, and periſh in a common deſtruction, without

without violating ſuch his promiſes; which can only be meant to reſpect ordinary and common events. And even in this caſe, there will "to the upright, "ariſe light in darkneſs." That is, light in the third ſenſe we have given of the word, as implying peace, joy and comfort; according to the Pſalmiſt, "light is ſown for the righteous, and gladneſs "for the upright in heart." Whatever afflictions the upright man ſuffers, he hath this advantage over others, that he can more eaſily bear them than they, without any great diſturbance to himſelf; becauſe he enjoys the ſame calmneſs and ſerenity of mind, the ſame peace, quiet and contentment, that ever he did. He rather rejoices, than repines and grows diſcontented under his preſent ſufferings; well knowing they are ſo ordered by the great governor of the world, for his good and benefit. This conſideration effectualy ſupports him under all difficulties he conflicts with; that he is not only eaſy and quiet, but well pleaſed with the diſpenſations of the divine providence towards him, how ungrateful ſoever to fleſh and blood. Let what will happen, he is full of peace and joy, not being diſappointed in his deſigns. His great aim was to pleaſe God, his conſcience aſſures him from God's word, that he has done it; and he waits for the happy time, when the ſecrets of all hearts ſhall be diſcloſed, and then doubts not of receiving approbation, and praiſe, and great reward; and his life and death will verify the Pſalmiſt's obſervation, "mark the perfect "man, and behold the upright, for the end of that "man is peace."

Diſcourſe XCII. Abp. *Tillotſon.*

Of SINCERITY, and the SIN of LYING.

John i. 47.

Jeſus ſaw Nathaniel coming to him, and ſaith of him, behold an Iſraelite indeed, in whom is no guile.

IT does not appear who this Nathaniel was, that our Saviour gave this extraordinary character of; but he was certainly a good man, to deſerve ſo great a commendation. In treating of the virtue of ſincerity, I ſhall conſider it, with reſpect to God and man. As it reſpects God, it means the truth and ſincerity of our piety and devotion towards him; as it regards man, it ſignifies a ſimplicity of mind and manners, in our converſation and behaviour towards one another. As this grace or virtue reſpects God, it imports the truth and ſincerity of our piety towards him; that we heartily believe, fear and honour him; that the outward expreſſions of our piety and obedience, proceed from our inward apprehenſions of, and affections towards him; that we ſincerely love God and his truth, and readily embrace it, whenever it be fairly propoſed to us. And becauſe ſincerity is the very ſubſtance of religion, it concerns us not only to endeavour after this temper and diſpoſition, but to diſcover its nature and properties. I ſhall therefore mention ſome properties of a ſincere piety, by which we may know the integrity of our hearts towards God. Firſt,

Our piety is then ſincere, when it proceeds from rational religious motives; that is, when the principal and prevailing motives of our piety, are a

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ſenſe of God's authority over us, and of our duty and obligation to him; a fear of his diſpleaſure and threatnings, and the hopes of that glorious reward which he hath promiſed to obedience: theſe are properly religious motives, becauſe they reſpect God, and are the arguments uſed by him to perſuade us to our duty. And inſincere piety is when we are moved merely by the regard of men, and the conſideration of ſome temporal advantages. And a man may eaſily diſcern when theſe have the chief influence upon him; for if he careſully obſerve himſelf, he muſt know the ſpring and motive of his own actions. A man may be aſſured his heart is not right towards God, when his piety and zeal for the true religion doth either ceaſe, cool or abate; for if we drop the profeſſion of our religion, or neglect the practice of it, this is a plain demonſtration of the inſincerity of our former piety. A ſincere piety muſt be rooted in the heart, and be a living principle within us; and without this, all acts of piety and devotion are hypocriſy; a picture of religion and form of godlineſs, without the life and power of it.

Another evidence of a ſincere piety is, when men are religious in private as well as in public. He is truly devout, who is ſo in his family and cloſet, where he hath no witneſs but God, and his own ſoul, as well as in the church. He is a real honeſt man, who as readily performs his word and promiſe when no proof can be made, no law compel him to it, as if there had been any number of witneſſes. He is ſincerely juſt, who will not wrong any man, tho' he could do it with the greateſt ſecrecy and ſafety; nor impoſe upon another's ignorance and unſkilfulneſs, tho' ever ſo much to his own beneſit and advantage. He is truly charitable, who chuſes to give his alms in ſecret, rather than in the ſight of men. He is ſincerely grateful, who

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on all proper occaſions, acknowledges a kindneſs, and requites a benefit to the relations of his deceaſed friend, when none but God and himſelf knew of the obligation. The ſincerity of any act of piety and virtue, may be known by this evidence; and on the contrary a man muſt be a hypocrite, if he is not the ſame before God and his own conſcience, that he is in the ſight of men. Again, a ſincere piety conſiſts in the conſtant practice of goodneſs, in the general courſe of our lives. The habits of any known ſin, the wilful deliberate neglect of our duties, and even the ſingle act of more heinous crimes, will bring our ſincerity in queſtion, and cannot be ſkreened under the name of infirmity. And he is not truly good, who doth not ſeriouſly endeavour to be as good as he can, and to perform a ſincere, tho' not a perfect obedience to the laws of God.

Another evidence of a ſincere piety is, that our obedience to God be uniform and univerſal, equally reſpecting all the laws of God, and every part of our duty. We muſt not regard ſome precepts of the law, and allow ourſelves in the breach or neglect of the reſt; obſerve the duties of one table of the law, and omit the other; no, nor obey all the commandments of God, one only excepted. For, he that keeps the whole law, ſaving that he offends in one point, is guilty of all. That is, his obedience is not ſincere to the reſt. We muſt not therefore ſet the commandments of God at variance, the two tables one againſt another, leſt we break the whole law. And yet I fear ſome who make great profeſſions of piety, are not ſufficiently ſenſible of the obligation of the duties of the ſecond table; and of the excellency of thoſe graces and virtues, which reſpect our behaviour to one another. God did not give us laws only for his own ſake, but alſo to promote our own happineſs; and

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therefore with our humble and dutiful deportment towards himſelf, he requires the offices of juſtice and charity towards others. He hath ſhewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do juſtice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God. And our Saviour commands, that he who loveth God, ſhould love his brother alſo. And yet it is too viſible, that many who make great profeſſions of piety towards God, are very defective in moral duties; very unpeaceable and turbulent, peeviſh and paſſionate, conceited and cenſorious, as if the meer profeſſion of godlineſs could exempt them from the practice of Chriſtian virtues. Men may be devout and zealous in religion, nice and ſcrupulous about the worſhip and ſervice of God, and yet by being deficient in points of juſtice and honeſty, meekneſs and humility, peace and charity, they may be groſs and notorious hypocrites. For we muſt not think by ſome acts of inward or outward piety, to compound with God, for the neglect of mercy and judgment; or to think it matter of right, to be excuſed from the great duties and virtues of human converſation; as if it was the privilege of great devotion, to allow men to be peeviſh and froward, moroſe and cenſorious in their behaviour towards others. We are not to regard the outward parts of religion, to the prejudiceof inward real goodneſs; and ſo to uſe the means of religion, ſuch as faſting, and outward mortification, as to neglect the main end of it. For theſe things, however uſeful and neceſſary, yet are only ſo when diſcreetly managed, and made ſubſervient to the great ends of religion. Care muſt be taken, that whilſt men are intent upon mortifying themſelves, they do not mortify virtue and goodnature, humility, meekneſs and charity; things highly valuable in themſelves, amiable in the eyes of men, and of great price in the ſight of God.

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The neglect of moral duties is a great ſcandal, and of pernicious conſequences to religion. An ill governed, ignorant, and injudicious zeal, for the honour of God, his worſhip, and ſervice, hath made ſome men do many unreaſonable, immoral, and impious things; for inconſiderate men, who give themſelves up to the conduct of blind prejudice, and furious zeal, are apt to think, that any thing is lawful, which they imagine will tend to promote the honour of God and religion. Hence ſome out of zeal for their religion and church, think it not only lawful, but highly commendable, even meritorious, to equivocate with oaths, to break faith with heretics, and to deſtroy all who differ from them; as if it was piety in ſome caſes, to lye for the truth, and to kill men for God's ſake. So that if we would approve the integrity of our hearts to God, and evidence the ſincerity of our obedience, we muſt impartially regard all God's laws, and every part of our duty, or our heart is not upright with God.

The laſt evidence I ſhall mention of the ſincerity of our religion, is, if it endures perſecution, and the fiery trial. The utmoſt proof of our integrity is to be willing to expoſe our worldly intereſt, even life itſelf, for the cauſe of God and religion. By this God tries whether we love him, and his truth in ſincerity. And thus I have conſidered this duty, as it reſpects God.

Sincerity, with regard to men, ſignifies a ſimplicity of mind and manners, in our behaviour and converſation; diſcovering itſelf in a conſtant, plain, honeſt and open carriage, free from all little tricks of craft and cunning, from all deceitful appearances in word or deed; in a word, to ſpeak as we think, to perform what we promiſe, to be in reality what we would be thought to be: not that we are obliged to tell every man our mind; but we are not to ſpeak

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contrary to it. We muſt be prudently ſilent, but we muſt not make a falſe appearance, to be what we are not, either by word or action. Contrary to this virtue, is, I fear, much of that complaiſant converſation among us, pretending that kindneſs and eſteem for perſons, which we have not, or to that degree our expreſſions import. This we call flattery, and is an odious ſort of inſincerity, becauſe it abuſes men into a vain opinion of themſelves, and of the kindneſs of others towards them. Few tempers have wiſdom and firmneſs to be proof againſt flattery; it requiring great conſideration, a reſolute modeſty, and true humility to reſiſt its inſinuations. Indeed all hypocriſy and inſincerity is mean in itſelf, having falſhood at the bottom; and is often made uſe of, to the prejudice of others, in their rights and intereſts. As diſſimulation is contrary to ſincerity, becauſe it conſiſts in a deceitful repreſentation of our virtues, qualities and character; ſo falſhood, fraud and perfidiouſneſs, which men too often practiſe one towards another, is yet of a more injurious and miſchievous conſequence. The former is great vanity, the latter groſs iniquity.

And yet ſome regard theſe qualities, as ſigns of great depth, highly neceſſary to accompliſh our deſigns; as if the art of managing human affairs, did conſiſt in theſe little tricks and devices: but he who examines them narrowly, will find them to be great follies, and that it is only for want of true wiſdom and underſtanding, that men have recourſe to diſſimulation and lyes. Solomon ſays, he that walketh rightly, walketh ſurely; but the folly of fools is deceit. That is, to play the knave, is a moſt egregious piece of folly. I do not deny, but theſe little arts may ſerve a preſent turn; but true wiſdom goes farther, regarding the future as well as the preſent, and by looking to the end of things,

things, doth clearly discover that craft and cunning only serve the present occasion; whereas integrity will be of lasting use, and serviceable to us, thro' the whole course of our lives. Having thus explained the nature of sincerity to God and man, I will now endeavour to persuade men to the practice of this excellent quality, in all the words and actions of their lives.

Let us then, in the first place, be sincere in our religion, and truly serve God, out of conscience of our duty and obligations to him; and not with sinister respects to our private interest, or to the public approbation, and censure of men. Let us not make use of religion, to serve any base unworthy ends, to cloak our designs of covetousness, ambition or revenge, nor with pretences of conscience, and zeal for God: but let us endeavour after the reality of religion, always remembering, that a sincere piety doth not consist in shew and appearance, but in substance and effect; that the spirit of true religion is calm, charitable, and peaceable; that a truly sincere good man does not affect vain ostentation, or a boasting of his good qualities, but rather endeavours really to be, than seem to be religious; and to conceal his piety, instead of making it public. He gives his alms privately, prays to God in secret, makes no appearance of religion, but in such fruits and effects as cannot be hid; in the quiet and silent virtues of humility, meekness, patience, peace and charity; in governing his passions, and not offending with his tongue, by slander and calumny, by envious detraction, or rash censure, by any word or action, that may injure and prejudice his neighbour. But if a man affects to make a great bustle about religion, blows a trumpet before his good works, and by extraordinary shews of religion, summons others to behold and take notice of his piety:

this is a very bad ſign, and has the appearance of hypocriſy.

And with the ſincerity of our piety towards God, let us join ſimplicity and integrity in our converſation with men. Let us uſe truth and plainneſs in all our words and actions; that our tongue may be ever the true interpreter of our minds, our expreſſions the lively image of our thoughts and affections, and our actions exactly agreeable to our inward purpoſes and intentions. The general want of ſincerity in our converſation, is one of the great corruptions and degeneracy of our age. The world is ſo full of diſſimulation and compliment, that mens words are ſcarce any ſignification of their thoughts. The old Engliſh plainneſs and ſimplicity, that generous integrity of nature and honeſty of diſpoſition, which proceeds from true greatneſs of mind, is in a great meaſure loſt among us. There has been a long endeavour to transform us into foreign manners and faſhions, and bring us to a ſervile imitation of our neighbours in ſome of their worſt qualities. And converſation is become ſo full of vanity and compliment, that was a man who lived an age ago to return into the world, he would ſcarce underſtand his own language; or with a good conſcience know how to converſe with men upon equal terms. To hear what ſolemn expreſſions of reſpect and kindneſs will paſs between men, upon no occaſion; how much eſteem they will profeſs for one, perhaps they never ſaw before! how infinitely obliged to him for no benefit, how extremely concerned, nay, afflicted for him, and for no cauſe! what hollow kind of converſation is all this? and juſt cauſe of complaint have we, that our language is running into a lye, that men pervert the uſe of ſpeech, and make words to ſignify nothing; but the greateſt part of converſation is little elſe but driving a trade of diſſimulation, ſo that

that we may ſay with the prophet, Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and truſt ye not in any brother; for every brother will utterly ſupplant, and every neighbour will walk with ſlanders. One ſpeaketh peaceably to his neighbour, but in his heart he lieth in wait. Shall not I viſit for theſe things, ſaith the Lord? and ſhall not my ſoul be avenged on ſuch a nation as this? As this character too well ſuits the preſent age, which is ſo wretchedly void of truth and ſincerity, there is the greater reaſon for recommending this virtue, which ſeems to be fled from us; to this end give me leave to offer the following conſiderations.

That ſincerity is the higheſt commendation, and the beſt character which can be given a man. It is the ſolid foundation, the heart and ſoul of all piety, virtue and goodneſs; and in ſcripture, it is ſpoken of as the ſum and comprehenſion of all religion. Only fear the Lord, and ſerve him with ſincerity and truth. And he that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteouſneſs, and ſpeaketh the truth from his heart, ſhall dwell with God. For bleſſed is the man, in whoſe ſpirit there is no guile. The rarity of this virtue is alſo a farther commendation of it; for a ſincerely pious and good man, without any diſguiſe, is ſeldom met with. Our Saviour ſpeaks of it, as a thing very extraordinary to ſee a man of perfect integrity and ſimplicity, and breaks out into ſome kind of wonder on the occaſion, which demands our more eſpecial attention and regard. "Behold (ſaith he) an Iſraelite indeed, in whom there is no guile." The want of ſincerity will quite ſpoil the virtue and acceptance of all our piety and obedience, and deprive us of its reward. All our external obedience to God's laws, if not animated by ſincerity, is an abomination to the Lord.

Hypocriſy and inſincerity is a vain and fooliſh thing, and tho' deſigned to cheat others, is in truth

deceiving ourſelves. No man would flatter or diſſemble, did he think he was ſeen and diſcovered. But all his hypocriſy is open to God's eye, from whom nothing can be hid. The ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he ſeeth all his goings; there is no darkneſs, nor ſhadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themſelves. Truth and ſincerity has every advantage over inſincerity; and whoever diſſembles and ſeems to be what he is not, thinks it right to have ſuch a quality as he pretends to. For to counterfeit and diſſemble, is to put on the appearance of ſome real excellency. But the beſt way is for a man to be in reality, what he would ſeem to be. For it is difficult to perſonate, and act a falſe part long; becauſe where truth is not at the bottom, nature will endeavour to return, and make a diſcovery. And truth carries its own light and evidence along with it; and not only commends us to every man's conſcience, but to God, the ſearcher of our hearts. So that ſincerity is the trueſt wiſdom. For integrity hath many advantages over all the artful ways of diſſimulation and deceit. It is a more plain and eaſy, a more ſafe and ſecure way of dealing. It hath leſs of trouble and difficulty, of danger and hazard; it is the ſhorteſt and neareſt way to our end, and will carry us thither in a ſtrait line. By integrity a man confirms his reputation, and encourages others to repoſe the greater truſt and confidence in him, which is a very conſiderable advantage in the buſineſs and affairs of life.

But a diſſembler muſt be always upon his guard, leſt he contradicts his own pretences. For he acts an unnatural part, and puts a continual force and reſtraint upon himſelf. Truth always lies uppermoſt, and will be apt to bolt out; but he that acts ſincerely, hath an eaſy taſk, becauſe he follows nature, and ſo needs not to invent pretences before,

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or excuſes afterwards, for any thing he ſays or doth. Inſincerity is troubleſome to manage; for a lyar ought to have a good memory, leſt he contradicts at one time, what he ſaid at another. But truth is always conſiſtent with itſelf, needs nothing to help it out, and is always near at hand; whereas a lye is troubleſome, it ſets a man's invention upon the rack, and one lye often occaſions many. Sincerity is firm and ſubſtantial, plain and open, fears no diſcovery, of which the crafty man is always in danger. Sincerity is the moſt compendious wiſdom, and an excellent inſtrument for the diſpatch of buſineſs. It creates confidence in thoſe we deal with, ſaves many enquiries, and brings things to a ſhort iſſue. And the inconvenience attending falſhood and diſſimulation is perpetual, becauſe it brings a man under a conſtant jealouſy and ſuſpicion; ſo as not to be believed when he ſpeaks truth, nor yet truſted, when he may mean honeſtly. When once a man hath forfeited the reputation of his integrity, neither truth nor falſhood can then ſerve him. Indeed, were we only to live in the world for a day, and have no occaſion to converſe more with mankind, nor need their good word, it would then be no great matter as to this world, was a man to loſe his reputation all at once; but ſince our continuance here is uncertain, we ſhould make uſe of truth and ſincerity in all our words and actions, for this will hold out to the end; this will carry us thro' the world, when all the arts of cunning and deceit, will fail and deceive us. "The lips of "truth are eſtabliſhed for ever, but a lying tongue is "but for a moment." I will now proceed, ſhortly to conſider the ſin and danger of lying, and the great benefit and advantage of ſpeaking the truth.

A lye, ſtrictly and properly ſo called, is, when a man ſignifies that to another, as true, which he himſelf knows or believes to be falſe, and

that with a deſign of impoſing upon him. As to the ſeveral ſorts of theſe lyes, much needs not be ſaid about that kind of lying, which is of all others the moſt generally practiſed; I mean, thoſe baſe ways of deceiving and over-reaching one another, which are ſo frequently uſed in trade, in buying and ſelling. Theſe are ſo evidently criminal, as that nothing can be alledged to juſtify or excuſe it; they are ſo odious both to God and man. "Lying "lips are an abomination to the Lord. And a righ-"teous man hateth lying." Theſe are ſo manifeſtly hateful both to God, and all good men; they tend ſo apparently to the ſubverſion of all juſtice and honeſty, and to the deſtruction of all civil ſociety, that even ſome barbarous nations have ſeverely puniſhed them. This practice is ſo baſe and mean, that men need only to have their conſciences awakened, by being put in mind, that "the getting of treaſures by a lying tongue, is a vanity toſſed to and fro of them that ſeek death." For would but men conſider, that if there be any ſuch thing as right and wrong, juſtice and injuſtice; if there be any obligation to maintain faith and truth among men, to preſerve ſociety, order, and good government in the world; this kind of lying muſt appear, the moſt unnatural and unlawful. But this will be yet more evident, by conſidering the nature of truth.

Every man's conſcience naturally aſſures him, that he is under an obligation to truth, diſtinct from all other conſiderations. In the natural judgment of our minds, we cannot forbear thinking, that there is ſomething in truth, which is great, noble and honourable; ſomething in falſhood, that is mean and baſe, unworthy of a man, and which renders him vile and contemptible to others. It is a fault which always hides its head, as being aſhamed of itſelf. Hence lying has been ever eſteemed the vice of ſlaves and vaſſals, of the meaneſt and worſt ſort of perſons.

perſons. But men of honour and reputation, have always an abhorrence and deteſtation of it. This ſhews us the native and genuine excellency of truth, conſidered in itſelf, and that the inward ſenſe of our conſcience, is againſt all falſhood and lyes. Indeed, it ſometimes happens, that a man's ſpeaking truth will be a hindrance to another, when falſifying would turn to his advantage; but then this ariſes from the unhappy circumſtances of their ſtate, into which men have brought themſelves by ſin. As lyes are abominable in the ſight of God, ſo are they to all good men. "All lyars ſhall have their "part in the lake, which burneth with fire and "brimſtone. A righteous man hateth lyin. "David would not ſuffer a ſervant, that was uſed "to tell lyes, to continue in his houſe."

To conclude; when a man looks back upon his paſt life, and finds that in the general courſe thereof, he has with ſimplicity and ſincerity obeyed the dictates of his own conſcience; that his actions have not been biaſſed by paſſion or appetite, by any mean, unlawful, or private intereſt; but that he has done all things in obedience to the law of God, with a ſincere deſign of promoting only the glory of God, the welfare of his neighbour, and his own true and eternal intereſt; in a word, that whatever particular infirmities he may have been guilty of, yet the main, the general and prevailing deſign of his life has always been upright and ſincere; the reſult of this muſt needs be ſuch a joy and ſatisfaction of mind, as is infinitely preferable to all other pleaſures in the world. He can look upon death, that king of terrors to the wicked, to be only a paſſage into a ſtate, where he is as ſure of being for ever happy, as he is, that true holineſs is acceptable to God, and will be rewarded by him. This is the ſtate of a truly religious ſincere man, at the hour of death. "Mark the perfect man,

and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace."

As certainly as there is a God, who governs the world; as certain as vice is odious, and virtue acceptable to him; as certain as a juſt God will reward thoſe who obey his laws, and puniſh thoſe who affront and deſpiſe them: ſo certain is it, that the ſincere upright man ſhall be juſtified, and fully rewarded, at the laſt and final judgment; in the day when God ſhall judge the ſecrets of men by Jeſus Chriſt. Plainneſs and ſincerity ſhall then appear the moſt perfect beauty; and the craftineſs of men, who lie in wait to deceive, ſhall be ſtript of all its colours; all ſpecious pretences, all the methods of deceit, ſhall then be diſcloſed before men and angels; and no artifice, no falſe colours, to conceal the deformity of iniquity, ſhall there take place. Then the ill deſigning men of this world, ſhall with ſhame be convinced, that that upright ſimplicity, which they deſpiſed and denied, is the trueſt wiſdom; and that thoſe diſhoneſt arts, which they ſo highly eſteemed, were in reality perfect folly."

Let us then be now, what we would gladly be found in that day, when all pretences ſhall be examined, and the cloſeſt hypocriſy of men ſhall be laid open; when the ſecrets of all hearts ſhall be diſcloſed, all the hidden works of darkneſs ſhall be revealed, all our thoughts, words, and actions ſhall be brought to a ſtrict and ſevere trial, and be cenſured, by that impartial and infallible judgment of God, which is according to truth; "in the "day when God ſhall judge the ſecrets of men by "Jeſus Chriſt."

Diſcourſe XCIII. Abp. *Sharpe.*

Of REGENERATION.

Rom. xii. 2.

Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds.

THESE words of St. Paul are commonly underſtood, to mean the whole of regeneration; but in reality, they ſignify only the principal part of it; for regeneration, or the new birth, conſiſts of two parts; an outward baptiſm, which includes a profeſſion of Chriſt's religion, and an inward ſanctification, or holineſs of heart and life. This is expreſsly told us by our Saviour and St. Paul; the firſt ſaid to Nicodemus, that "except a "man be born again, he cannot ſee the kingdom of "God:" And in the next words, our Saviour explains what he means by this new birth, "except a "man be born of water and of the ſpirit, he cannot "enter into the kingdom of God." So that to a man's being born again, there muſt be the baptiſm of water, and the renewing of the ſpirit. To the ſame purpoſe ſpeaks St. Paul: "God according to his "mercies hath ſaved us, not by works of righteouſ-"neſs, which we have done, but by the waſhing "of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy "Ghoſt;" the waſhing of regeneration is the outward part, the renewing of the Holy Ghoſt the inward. Well, therefore, might our church teach in her offices, that infants are regenerated by baptiſm, ſince both ſcripture and antiquity ſpeak the ſame. The truth is, this term of regeneration,

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or the new birth, cannot be properly underſtood without having reſpect to baptiſm.

Our Saviour ſeems to take this expreſſion from the Jews, who meant by it, a man's becoming a proſelyte to their religion, and being admitted thereto by baptiſm; which was the way of receiving proſelytes into the church, but with the addition of circumciſion to ſome. And whoever was thus admitted into the Jewiſh church, was ſaid to be new born, or regenerate; and they eſteemed a proſelyte to be really new born, that they judged him ever after a ſtranger to all his natural relations. And where our Saviour ſays, "except a "man be born again, he cannot ſee the kingdom "of heaven;" he means hereby, to expreſs the abſolute neceſſity which lies on every one, both Jew and Gentile, to become a proſelyte, a diſciple of his, and as ſuch to be admitted into his church, if he intends to go to heaven. Indeed, our Srviour's notion of regeneration was more extenſive than the Jews, who thought an outward baptiſm, or profeſſion, ſufficient to entitle a man to the name of new-born. But our Saviour requires a man's being born of the ſpirit, as well as of water, in order to his entering into the kingdom of heaven; that is, beſides an outward baptiſm, and profeſſion, there muſt be an inward principle of virtue and holineſs wrought in the perſon by the ſpirit of God; but yet both may go together, if a man will himſelf: For whoever hath the outward regeneration of baptiſm, may alſo have the inward regeneration of the ſpirit, if he is not falſe to God and himſelf.

What the apoſtle means, by the being transformed by the renewing of our minds, will eaſily appear, if we conſider the foregoing words; "be not con-"formed to this world, but be ye transformed, by the "renewing of your minds." By knowing what conformity

formity to the world is here forbidden, we may certainly learn what transformation or renewal of our minds is required; and no leſs is intended by this prohibition, than a ſinful compliance with the cuſtom of the world; the framing our lives and manners after the impious practices and examples of wicked men; and indulging ourſelves in bad and evil courſes. But the being transformed by the renewing of our minds is directly oppoſite thereto, and denotes our being acted with more heavenly and divine principles, and framing our converſation ſuitable to our profeſſion of chriſtianity, that is, the laws of the Goſpel. If we behave "as obedient children, not faſhioning ourſelves "according to former luſts, but are holy in all "manner of converſation;" then are we not conformed to the world, but transformed by the renewing of our minds.—This is "the new crea-"ture, the being born of God, the being led by "the Spirit, the being created after the image of "God, the putting on the new man;" all which ſignify no more than this, that to our baptiſm, belief, and profeſſion of Chriſt's religion, to an honeſt, ſincere, and holy principle, we take care to add, a ſober, righteous, and godly converſation.

Having thus in general conſidered the nature of ſpiritual regeneration, I ſhall proceed to anſwer ſome queſtions relating thereto; as, whether regeneration be ſo intirely the work of God's ſpirit on a man's mind, as that he is perfectly paſſive in it, and can do nothing to promote or hinder it in himſelf? Whether a man is inwardly regenerate, that hath not experienced in himſelf a real change, or transformation of mind, from bad to good? Whether this change is not ſo perceptible, as that a man may know, when, and how, it was wrought in him? What are the marks or characters

characters by which a man may judge of his regeneration?

I begin with the firſt; and though the queſtion looks like a point of ſpeculation, yet it really much concerns our practice. For if a man can contribute nothing to the renovation of his own mind, to what purpoſe ſhould we employ our thoughts and endeavours about it? To this queſtion I therefore anſwer, that as to producing in man that holy divine frame of ſoul, which is neceſſary to denominate him a regenerate man, this is entirely the work of God's ſpirit. But then, God always acts with men ſuitable to their own natures; and they being made free agents, capable of chuſing and refuſing, he always deals with them as ſuch; ſo that it is in their power either to accept and improve God's grace when offered, or to refuſe and deſpiſe it; therefore, though generation, or the renewing of our minds, is wholly the work of God's ſpirit, yet it is in a man's power to hinder or promote that work in himſelf. And I doubt not, but that all who profeſs chriſtianity, would be made partakers of the renewing of the Holy Ghoſt, as well as they are of the regeneration of baptiſm, did not they themſelves obſtinately reſiſt the motions of God's ſpirit, and neglect the means that he affords them, for grace and ſalvation. He that finds this happy work wrought in him, ought moſt humbly to thank God, and aſcribe it to his free grace and mercy; and he that is yet in a ſtate of ſin and wickedneſs, ſhould uſe his beſt endeavours, and call earneſtly on God for his grace and mercy, to reclaim him, or there is little probability of his becoming a convert to virtue and holineſs.

But, ſome will ſay, this account is not conſiſtent with ſcripture. For there, every man in his natural ſtate, is repreſented as dead in treſpaſſes and ſins,

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And is not regeneration the infuſing a new nature into man, and making him a new creature? And is it not abſurd to ſay, a dead man can raiſe himſelf to life, or a creature new form and create himſelf? I anſwer, that however abſurd it ſeems, yet it is the language of ſcripture. God calls on Iſrael to make themſelves a new heart, and a new ſpirit. St. Paul thus ſpeaks to ſinners, "awake, thou that "ſleepeſt, and riſe from the dead, and Chriſt ſhall "give thee life;" and in the words I am treating of, he deſires chriſtians not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of their minds. All which ſhew, that men muſt not be perfectly paſſive in this buſineſs, like ſtocks and ſtones. For though God creates the new heart, and Chriſt gives the life, and the ſpirit transforms the mind, yet man muſt do ſomething in this work. In truth, the miſunderſtanding theſe phraſes of ſcripture, and ſtraining them too far, occaſions many miſtakes about regeneration. Some will take the term of regeneration, or the new birth, or the new creature, in a literal ſenſe, though they ought to be underſtood figuratively; that is, we are not to imagine theſe words import a new ſoul, mind, or nature, created in man by the ſpirit of God, which is the literal ſenſe; but only, that the ſame ſoul, which had a vicious inclination, is now by God's grace virtuouſly diſpoſed; that the ſame mind, which before was ignorant, and averſe to the things of God, is now enlightned, and doth more love and delight therein than before. The nature in the regenerate, and the unregenerate, is the ſame human nature that is common to all men; only in the one it is much corrupted and depraved; in the other, it is in ſome meaſure amended, and reſtored to its true perfection and liberty. Nor are theſe words, "we are all dead in treſpaſſes and "ſins, and that God by Chriſt hath quickened and

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" created us again to good works," to be ſtrictly underſtood, but only metaphorically: For here is neither a proper death, a proper quickening, nor a proper creation; but the meaning of theſe terms is, that mankind, through their original degeneracy, were ſo far gone in ſin, that there was no poſſibility of reclaiming them to holineſs and virtue, by any human means. But God by ſending his ſon, and affording them the powerful arguments of his Goſpel, with the aſſiſtance of the holy Spirit, effected what nature alone could not do.

The next queſtion is, whether ſome may not be truly regenerate, though they never experienced a real change from bad to do good? I will conſider this point more particularly, becauſe it hath troubled ſome very good perſons. To theſe, it ſhould be obſerved, that by the ſcriptures, regeneration is abſolutely neceſſary to ſalvation; that except a man be born again, created a new, and transformed by the renewing of his mind, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God; and that theſe expreſſions import a very great change in a man's mind and actions: But yet they think themſelves ignorant of their condition, becauſe they never found ſuch change in themſelves, but were always much in the ſame temper of mind as at preſent. They, indeed, thank God for having had a hearty ſenſe of religion; they have endeavoured to ſerve him with great ſincerity in that way of Chriſtianity in which they have been educated; and God hath mercifully preſerved them from all great and open violations of their baptiſmal covenant. But ſtill, where is their regeneration? For they are but what they ever were. To this I anſwer; If a man finds in himſelf all the effects of regeneration, it is no matter whether they were wrought in him with a ſenſible change of his mind and manners, or not; the ſtate of man's ſoul, is the thing

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to be conſidered. If that be governed with holy principles, and they ſhew themſelves in a conſtant courſe of virtuous actions, ſuch an one may be aſſured he is truly regenerate; without knowing the manner how, or when he came into this ſtate.

Indeed, at the time when our Saviour, and his apoſtles uſed theſe words, they did import a remarkable and ſenſible change in the perſon: And the reaſon is, becauſe Chriſtianity was then a new religion, to which the world was to be converted, and none were capable of being converted by the apoſtles preaching, but ſuch as were come to years of diſcretion; the very notion of whoſe converſion, was an actual renouncing their former religion, their wicked and idolatrous practices, and entirely devoting themſelves to the diſcipline and conduct of Jeſus Chriſt. And none could thus exchange one religion for another, leave ſuch practices and cuſtoms, and form their converſation after a new and ſtricter way, without being ſenſible of a great change in their principles and lives. And therefore, the Chriſtian ſtate is called, converſion, transformation, and the new creature. But ſince kingdoms and nations have embraced Chriſtianity, and that infants are baptized into it, the caſe is different. For by the advantage of a Chriſtian education, the principles of that religion are ſo gradually inſtilled, that when we come of age, we chuſe for ourſelves, we embrace doctrines of Chriſtianity rather than any other, without violence or difficulty. Many of us were ſanctified, holy, and regenerate in our infancy, when we were conſecrated to God; and as we grew up, his grace was not wanting, through the means of a religious education, to ſow the ſeeds of virtue and holineſs in our ſouls, which by degrees came to greater perfection; ſo that when grown to maturity, we found

found ourſelves without any ſenſible change from bad to good, to have a prevailing inclination to what is good, and to bring forth the fruits of the ſpirit in our converſation. This is all that is meant by regeneration in ſuch a caſe, though we know not when, or how, we came into this ſtate. This is the proper and full ſenſe of the word; for here is both the outward regeneration of baptiſm, and the inward regeneration of the ſpirit attending it. But then this is true only as to ſuch that have always lived virtuouſly and innocently, and never greatly departed from their baptiſmal vow. As for thoſe, who had a bad education, or the abuſing a good one, have lived in a ſtate of ſin and wickedneſs, from the time they came to years of diſcretion, theſe are not regenerate, as to the inward ſpiritual part; but muſt ſome time or other undergo a real change and transformation, both in their principles and courſe of life, if ever they intend to be ſaved.

Another queſtion is, whether the change that is made in a man's mind, in regeneration, is always ſo perceptible, as that he may know when, and how, it was produced in him? My anſwer is, that this only reſpects ſuch as have formerly lived a careleſs vicious life, and ſo of neceſſity muſt have their principles and manners transformed; but concerns not thoſe that have been well diſpoſed from their childhood: So that it is not neceſſary that every one ſhould be able to give an account of the beginning of regeneration, or converſion; and even as to thoſe who have been vicious, and are afterwards ſo reformed, as to have juſt hopes that they are in a good condition; it is not neceſſary that every one ſhould be ſenſible of a ſudden extraordinary change in themſelves, ſo as to date their converſion from ſuch a time, or ſuch a circumſtance, or particular providence. My reaſon

ſon is, becauſe it doth not appear, eſpecially in our days, that the work of regeneration, or converſion is effected in a moment and at once, but rather gradually by many ſteps and degrees. Men who have lived in a courſe of ſin and wickedneſs, can hardly be imagined to put off their vicious habits on a ſudden, or in a moment; but before that is accompliſhed, there muſt be many trials, and endeavours. It will require great meditation, much ſelf-denial, and mortification; old habits muſt be weakened and deſtroyed, before new ones can be acquired; this will demand much time, ſtudy, reſolution, and repeated acts of virtue, before new habits can be effectually wrought in wicked perſons. For, as the poet well obſerved, "none "ever grew extremely wicked all at once, but by "degrees;" ſo that thoſe that have been bad, but grown good, cannot in an inſtant leap from one extreme to another, but muſt paſs through ſeveral ſtages and ſtates, before the virtuous principle hath conquered the vicious.

This being the caſe, it is not reaſonable to think, that every convert to holineſs and virtue, ſhould be able to give an account of the preciſe time he was converted, though he may remember ſeveral particular incidents relating thereto. This will more clearly appear by the following inſtance; a man languiſheth under a tedious diſtemper, but though he follows the advice of phyſicians, he doth not quickly mend; he is ſometimes better, at other times worſe: But at laſt, with time and the ſtrength of nature, good preſcriptions, regularity, and God's bleſſing, he, by degrees, gets ſtrength, recovers his diſtemper, and finds himſelf in a good ſtate of health. But can the man thus recovered be ſenſible of the exact time he became a ſound man? He may remember his taking phyſic, his ſometimes growing better, and recovering at laſt,

perhaps, after ſeveral relapſes, and yet not able to name the punctual minute, day, or week, when he could on good grounds ſay, he was cured of his diſeaſe. His health came gradually and inſenſibly, and when he loſt all ſymptoms of ſickneſs, he had cauſe to rejoice. But it would be idle for him to ſay, he became well at ſuch an hour, or to be ſo confident of his health, as to lay aſide all fear of future danger, or to doubt of his recovery, becauſe he cannot name the time, manner or circumſtance, with which it was effected. This inſtance is ſo plain and pertinent, that I need not enlarge on this head.

The laſt queſtion is, concerning the marks and ſigns of regeneration. Some perſons have been ſo forward to multiply marks of converſion or regeneration, as rather to obſcure, than clear the difficulty, and have often brought needleſs ſcruples into men's heads. The point lies in a ſhort compaſs, and requires no great learning, or ſubtlety, to diſcover it. For regeneration, as we now underſtand it, conſiſts in an hearty ſenſe of God and the Chriſtian religion, and in a ſerious conſtant endeavour to live ſuitably to that ſenſe in all our converſation. So that the marks of a regenerate perſon ought to be drawn from thoſe effects that he feels in himſelf. If a man to his baptiſm, faith in Chriſt, and profeſſion of the Chriſtian religion, joins a ſerious conſcientious conformity to the laws of Chriſt in all his actions, ſo far as his knowledge, the circumſtances of his life, and the natural infirmities of human nature will allow him; if he heartily deſires, conſtantly reſolves, and ſincerely endeavours to pleaſe God and ſave his own ſoul, in all the ways of righteouſneſs, ſobriety, and holineſs, that the goſpel preſcribes; if he lives innocently, avoids all open, known, and wilful ſin; and is truly ſenſible of all his frailties and omiſſions; if

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he begs God's pardon for, and ſtrives againſt them, and grows rather better than worſe, more inclined to good, and more averſe to evil; this is the beſt, the only mark, whereby any one may know if he be in a regenerate condition, in a ſtate of God's favour; and ſuch may reſt ſatisfied as to their future happineſs. Indeed regeneration, by the numerous marks that ſome have ſet upon it, has been rendered a much more intricate and difficult thing; but there are two great inconveniences in multiplying the ſigns and marks of regeneration; the one is, that a man may be a very good Chriſtian and a regenerate perſon, and not find in himſelf ſuch marks as ſome give of it; the other is, that a bad man may experience ſuch marks when good men can not.

But it may be proper, briefly to conſider a few miſtakes concerning regeneration; one of which is, that regeneration and ſanctification do really ſignify two different things, when in truth they are but different expreſſions of the ſame thing. Regeneration is a metaphor uſed in ſcripture, to expreſs our tranſlation and change from one ſtate to another, from a ſtate of ſin and wickedneſs to that of grace and holineſs. And ſanctification is our being made holy, purified, and cleanſed from ſin and impurity. Hence regeneration and ſanctification are attributed to the ſame cauſes, I mean, to the ſpirit and word of God; we are ſaid to be born of the ſpirit, to be ſanctified of the Holy Ghoſt, to be begotten, and to be ſanctified by the word of truth, that is, the word of God. So that the ſcriptures ſpeak of them as the ſame thing, which they really are; for if ſanctification be the making of us holy, as well as regeneration, then they are both the ſame.

Another miſtake is, that in regeneration and converſion, ſome think all the habits of grace are

infuſed together, and at once; that is, for men who were vicious before in ſeveral kinds, to be in an inſtant, by an omnipotent act of God's grace, and by a new principle infuſed into them, endued with the habits of the contrary graces and virtues; and to be as chaſte, temperate, juſt, meek, and humble, as if they become ſo, by the frequent practice of theſe virtues. I do not deny, but this may ſometimes be the caſe; for ſome men, by an extraordinary power of God's grace, are ſuddenly changed, and ſtrangely reclaimed from a wicked and vicious, to a religious, and virtuous life. This may in ſome ſenſe be called the infuſion of the habits of grace and virtue together at once; but even in ſuch, I doubt not, but that the habits of ſeveral graces and virtues are afterwards attained, by the frequent practice of them. This was common and viſible in many of the firſt converts to Chriſtianity, eſpecially of thoſe who were reclaimed from the abominable idolatry and impiety of Heatheniſm. The ſpirit of God did then work miraculouſly in the cures of both ſpiritual and bodily diſeaſes. But to make this the rule and ſtandard of God's ordinary proceedings in the converſion and regeneration of men, is equally as unreaſonable, as ſtill to expect miracles for the cure of diſeaſes. And that there is no neceſſity it ſhould be effected in an inſtant, but by degrees, plainly appears from the nature of regeneration; which is the change of a man's ſtate from ſin to holineſs.

The new teſtament ſpeaks of the ſudden change of many, on the firſt preaching the goſpel, but it is not of abſolute neceſſity, nor the ordinary method of God's grace, to work irreſiſtibly on the minds of men; the not conſidering which hath occaſioned the chief miſtakes in this matter. We find that good perſons are made ſo, by the inſenſible

ble ſteps and degrees of a religious education; who having been never vicious, know nothing of any ſenſible change. And was an irreſiſtible act of divine power neceſſary to our repentance and converſion; then no man would repent on any conſideration and choice, but by force and neceſſity, which deſtroys the virtue of repentance.

Let us not then make ſome particular inſtances in ſcripture, as to the ſtrange and ſudden converſion of ſome perſons, namely, St. Paul, and the jailor, the common rule and meaſure of every man's converſion, ſo as that unleſs a man be enlightened from heaven, frighted almoſt out of his ſenſes, he can have no aſſurance of his converſion; when a much ſurer judgment may be made of a man's ſincerity therein, by the real effects of this change, than by the manner of it. The effects of God's holy ſpirit in the regeneration of men are ſenſible, though the manner and degrees of his operation on their ſouls are various, and not to be accounted for. If we plainly ſee many inſenſibly changed, and made good by pious education; and that others, who have lived long in a profane contempt and neglect of religion, are by the ſecret power of God's word and holy ſpirit, on calm conſideration without any great terrors and amazement viſibly changed, and brought to a better mind and courſe: It is in vain in theſe caſes to pretend, that this change is not real, becauſe the manner of it is not agreeable to ſome inſtances in ſcripture, or to our own obſervation; or that theſe perſons cannot give ſuch an account of the time and manner of this converſion, as others can.

To conclude; we ought not to be curious about the marks of our regeneration; or, when we read books that treat of theſe things we ſhould not be too much exalted, or caſt down, whether the marks we there find to be given, do agree or not

with our ſtate. The trueſt mark is that of our Saviour; the tree is known by its fruits. If a man be baptized, and ſincerely endeavours to lead a good life; if his faith in Jeſus Chriſt be ſo ſtrong as by it to overcome the world and the evil cuſtoms thereof; if he ſo conforms himſelf to the laws of our Saviour, as not to live in any wilful tranſgreſſion of them, but in the general courſe of his life, walks honeſtly and piouſly, and keeps a good conſcience towards God and man; ſuch a perſon, however he came into this ſtate, and with whatever infirmities it may be attended, ſo as he prays and ſtrives againſt them, is a good man, and gives a true evidence of his regeneration, though he may not have all the marks and qualifications that he may read in ſome books; ſuch a man, if he perſeveres in this religious courſe, will, without doubt, at laſt be juſtified before God, and find an admiſſion into the everlaſting kingdom of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

Diſcourſe XCIV. Abp. *Hort.*

The CHRISTIAN LIFE deſcribed.

Titus ii. 11, 12.

For the grace of God that bringeth ſalvation, hath appeared to all men; teaching us, that denying all ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world.

THE grace of God here, and in many other places of ſcripture, ſignifies the goſpel of our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, which is the higheſt manifeſtation of God's grace and favour that was ever made to mankind. Here only we learn, that God "ſo loved the world, as to give his only begot-"ten ſon, that whoſoever believeth in him, ſhould "not periſh, but have everlaſting life." Here only we learn, that God will pardon our ſins, and reſtore us to his favour upon our ſincere repentance and amendment. Here only it is, that life and immortality, things before but obſcurely hinted, are brought to light. Here only are to be found the aſſurances of a reſurrection to a life of glory and felicity, which God, who cannot lye, hath promiſed to all good men. The grace of God in the goſpel, bringeth ſalvation to all men, to every nation and country under heaven, and to every one, who "will deny all ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, "and live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this "preſent world." In theſe words, the duty of every good Chriſtian is laid down in natural order.

He muſt begin with denying all ungodlineſs and worldly luſts; all kind of wickedneſs, every tranſgreſſion of God's law. For all who nameth the name of Chriſt, and would become a good Chriſtian, muſt depart from iniquity. The eſſential parts of the Chriſtian life, are here diſtinguiſhed according to their reſpective objects; with regard to ourſelves, it is ſobriety; with reſpect to other men, it is righteouſneſs; and with regard to God, it is godlineſs.

The virtue of ſobriety chiefly conſiſts in the government of our ſenſual appetites and inclinations, which generally betray us into thoſe irregularities that are contrary to ſobriety; "every "man is tempted when he is drawn away of his "own luſts, and enticed; then when luſt hath con-"ceived, it bringeth forth ſin." The principal of thoſe ſenſual appetites, which are apt to draw us into exceſs, are theſe following. The appetite for meat and drink, with reſpect to which ſobriety conſiſts in temperance. The appetite for continuing the ſpecies called concupiſcence, and here ſobriety means chaſtity. The appetite for riches, and here ſobriety ſignifies contentment.

The appetite for meat and drink was implanted in our nature, to excite us to take that nouriſhment, which is neceſſary to preſerve health and life. But the misfortune is, that theſe good things, which were deſigned to give us innocent pleaſure, are through the corruption of our nature abuſed, and made the occaſions of gluttony, drunkenneſs, and all kind of intemperance, to God's diſhonour, and the reproach of our natures. This being the corrupt ſtate of the world in St. Paul's time, he labours every where to prove, that Chriſtianity is a religion that requires great purity of life and manners, and that Chriſtians muſt become new creatures, "putting off the old man, which is cor-

"rupt

" rupt according to the deceitful lusts, and putting
" on the new man, which after God is created
" in righteousness and true holiness; not living
" after the flesh, but through the spirit, mortify-
" ing the deeds of the body." So that Christians must not give way to the cravings of their sensual appetites, but must govern and restrain them within the strict rules of sobriety and temperance. We must " take heed lest our hearts be
" overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness,
" and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil
" the lusts thereof; but constantly imitate the strict
" virtue and sobriety of our blessed Saviour." It is difficult I confess to fix the limits of eating and drinking, because of the different constitutions of people; every one must therefore judge for himself, and by experience discover the bounds of temperance. But in general, we must beware of approaching too near to vice, for fear of our own treacherous hearts, and the force of temptation. Sobriety with respect to eating and drinking lies within a small compass. St. Paul thus describes gluttons, that their God is their belly. The same he said of those who place their chief happiness in eating and drinking, who gratify a wanton palate at any price, even to the impairing their fortunes, the ruin of their families, and the utter neglect of charity.

The vice of drunkenness is more easily distinguished, being written in legible characters, in the eyes, tongue and feet; besides the loss of reason, and transforming a man into a brute, a wise man into a fool. Indeed, drunkenness is often unpremeditated, and gradually creeps on without being perceived; but this is no excuse, as every one knows the bad consequences, and that it often ends in madness. For the reason once dethroned, and the passions inflamed, they hurry a man into all sorts of wickedness

wickedneſs and miſchief. There is hardly a glutton or drunkard who does not repent the next day of his debauch; but as ſuch repentance is only the effect of exceſs, it ſoon vaniſhes without any reformation. But it muſt at laſt come to a real repentance; for when the conſtitution is broken, the powers of nature fail, and death approaches, a man can ſcarce help repenting; but then it will be too late, becauſe it cannot be proved true by amendment of life. Thus the voluptuous man in the goſpel, "went clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared ſumptuouſly every day," and could ſpare nothing from his luxury for poor Lazarus, who lay periſhing at his gate; but when he was in hell, he earneſtly begged for a drop of water from the ſame Lazarus, to cool his tongue. Let Chriſtians who indulge their appetite in drunkenneſs and gluttony, from hence learn to prevent a late repentance, by reſtraining their ſenſual inclinations; and to deny all ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and live ſoberly in the preſent world, for theſe of all vices are moſt contrary to Chriſtian ſobriety. I proceed to conſider

The appetite of concupiſence, or that of continuing the race of mankind in the world. Sobriety with regard to this is chaſtity. Were men left at large as to this appetite, many miſchiefs and inconveniences would enſue. The alliances of families and ties of blood muſt ceaſe. Inheritance and property would be confounded. The endearments peculiar to conjugal affection, and the mutual fidelity between huſband and wife would be loſt. The education of children would be neglected; for children would not know their own fathers, nor fathers their children, ſo that all parental and filial affection would be at an end. In ſhort, the race of mankind would be ſo diſunited and blended, that the world muſt ſoon run into infinite confuſions and diſorders,

diſorders. For theſe reaſons God hath wiſely reſtrained this appetite, and ordained the holy ſtate of matrimony, that the human race ſhould be perpetuated this way, and all other offsprings be eſteemed ſpurious and diſhonourable. The Chriſtian religion forbids all impure commerce under the higheſt penalties. " Neither fornicators nor adul-" terers ſhall inherit the kingdom of God; and " whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." No corrupt communication muſt proceed out of our mouths, nor fooliſh talking and jeſting, becauſe theſe are apt to inflame unlawful deſires. And whoſoever looketh on a woman to luſt after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. Theſe are the reſtraints which the goſpel hath laid upon this unruly appetite, and are refinements of purity and chaſtity, which eſcaped the beſt of the heathen moraliſts, being reſerved for the religion of Chriſt.

As to the appetite for riches, with regard to which ſobriety means contentment; this is a falſe appetite of man's making, and not implanted in us by God. The deſire of whatever is neceſſary for the ſupport and comfort of life is natural and reaſonable, and may lawfully be gratified by all honeſt means. And tho' this appetite for money may not at firſt ſeem contrary to the ſobriety here recommended; (for covetous men are moſt remarkable for their ſobriety and temperance, and the reaſon is plain, becauſe their ſenſual appetites cannot be indulged without great expence) yet it is not virtue that makes covetous men abſtemious, but to ſave their money; this being their prevailing taſte, they will deny themſelves even the neceſſaries of life to gratify it. But as little as covetouſneſs may in appearance be contrary to ſobriety, yet in truth it is inconſiſtent with it, becauſe it is a ſtranger to contentment, and never thinks it has enough, but is always

always craving more; and even old age, which abates other appetites, does but encreaſe this. And tho' it be free from drunkenneſs, gluttony and other pleaſurable vices, yet it is attended with a different guilt, more injurious to men; ſuch as oppreſſion, exaction, cheating, want of charity to the poor, of beneficence to mankind, and of a contented ſpirit, the natural companions of avarice, and therefore ranked amongſt the blackeſt vices in ſcripture. A covetous man the Lord abhors. No covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of God; and which is the only inheritance he never coveted. They "that will be rich fall into temptation, and a ſnare, and into many fooliſh and hurtful luſts, which drown men into deſtruction and perdition; for the love of money is the root of all evil."

Under the appetite of riches, I cannot omit the love of gaming. I mean not that profligate ſort, which is made a profeſſion, but that more reputable kind, which obtains a ſanction, from perſons who are otherwiſe to be juſtly eſteemed and imitated. The moſt innocent recreations may become faulty, if they take up that time which ought to be more profitably employed, or betray us into unreaſonable hours, to the neglect of our families and devotions; ot if they ſo poſſeſs our hearts, that we are miſerable when a party diſappoints us, and think it an evening loſt, if it be not devoted to play. Theſe are violent ſymptoms that the love of money is the prevailing ingredient; and that recreation is not the only thing in view. Indeed the love of money, when it is inordinate, and engroſſes our affections, time and purſuits, to the neglect of our duty to God, our neighbour, or families, cannot be reconciled with the ſobriety of true Chriſtians.

The next diviſion of our Chriſtian duty, is to live righteouſly in this preſent world. A duty which extends

tends to all our dealings with men. For righteouſneſs requires us to be fair and equal in all our contracts and agreements; taking no advantage of the ignorance, weakneſs, or neceſſities of our neighbour; but to be punctual in performing our obligations, fulfilling the mutual intention, and appealing to our conſciences as witneſſes for us. It requires us to render to all their dues, not only debts in law, but in equity and good conſcience; and to do this chearfully, without compulſion, readily without delay, or having recourſe to evaſions, which is a real injuſtice; for there is no honeſty in paying debts when it cannot be helped. And yet to the great ſhame of our country, too much of this injuſtice is found among us. For when we ſee luxury in dreſs, furniture, equipage and ſplendid tables, ſupplied by poor tradeſmen, who are unmercifully kept out of their money, till they are ruined and undone by ſupporting the vanity of thoſe who deſpiſe them; what is this but the greateſt injuſtice? —We ſhould alſo avoid contracting debts beyond what we are able to pay; for this is to run the riſque of being diſhoneſt, and to abuſe the confidence which others repoſe in us.

Another branch of righteouſneſs relates to the good name and credit of our neighbour. There is a great tenderneſs due to the good name of every one. If a man in buſineſs be ſlandered, it may deprive him and his family of their bread, for the miſchief is ſoon done; and when once ſlander is out, it runs and ſpreads apace, and is hard to be recalled. And as we ſhould not injure him in his good name, ſo neither in his life, health and limbs, for theſe are ſtill more precious to him; and no kind of injuſtice is ſo cruel, as what tends to deſtroy, or hurt theſe, for which no reparation can be made.--- This leads me to ſpeak of duelling; a practice not to be reconciled with the principles of chriſtianity,

nor

nor even with moral virtue or common ſenſe. For what can be more contrary to righteouſneſs, than for a private man to be judge and executioner in his own cauſe? Not a cool and indifferent, but a paſſionate and exaſperated judge, and where the ſentence is no leſs than death. And tho' the vindication of honour is pretended, yet I fear it often proceeds from revenge and thirſt of blood. And all perſons of virtue and religion will condemn the cruelty and injuſtice of that man, who attempts the life of his neighbour for a rude word, or a haſty ſtroke; and will call it a ſavage and inhuman principle, contrary to juſtice, goodneſs, charity, and every amiable quality of human nature. And I could wiſh that our men of gallantry would conſider theſe things, and weigh the folly and danger of giving or accepting a challenge, which may end in immediate death, or the loſs of health and limbs to one if not to both. The ſurvivor, however he may palliate his crime, is no better than a murderer. Juries may call it manſlaughter; but at the grand aſſize, before the great judge, no ſuch diſtinction will be allowed. He may indeed live to repent; but how can any wilful murderer obtain mercy, when it is out of his power to make any reparation? But what becomes of the wretch that falls? his caſe is truly deplorable, for he dies in the very act of wickedneſs, when repentance is impoſſible.

Almſgiving is another branch of Chriſtian righteouſneſs, as a debt to Almighty God. He gave us our being, and has indefeaſible right in all that belongs to us; we are therefore no better than his ſtewards; we hold our wealth ſubject to his orders, and every fit object of charity that providence puts in our way, is entitled to our benevolence. Indeed the object nor quantity of our charity, is no where preſcribed. Theſe are left to every man's prudence and conſcience; only let every man give

give not grudgingly or of neceſſity, for God loveth a chearful giver. He that ſoweth ſparingly ſhall reap alſo ſparingly, and he that ſoweth bountifully, ſhall reap alſo bountifully.

The chief branches of righteouſneſs then, with regard to our neighbour, are, to pay to every man what we owe him in juſtice and equity chearfully, and without compulſion. To be tender of his credit and good name; avoiding all ſlander that may hurt his reputation; and to defend and juſtify him, as far as truth will permit. To reſtrain our paſſions, from committing acts of violence upon his perſon; to protect his health, life or limbs, as far as conſiſts with prudence and our own ſafety. To relieve his wants by our alms, according to our abilities, and we have a rule to aſſiſt us in all caſes; for whatſoever we would that men ſhould do unto us, let us even ſo do unto them, for this is the law and the prophets. By conſulting our own conſcience, this oracle will always teach us how to be righteous in all caſes.

I proceed to conſider another moſt important article of Chriſtian duty, which is to live godly. In general to live godly, is to have that habitual ſenſe of the being and attributes of God, impreſſed upon our minds, as may upon all occaſions duly influence not only our outward behaviour, but our very thoughts and deſigns; ſo as to be the governing principle of our whole lives. A good man is one who ſets the Lord always before his eyes; who accuſtoms himſelf to meditate upon God, and by frequent contemplation of his infinite perfections, imprints upon his ſpirits an habitual regard and veneration for him. And an irreligious man is one who lives without God in the world; and has not God in all his thoughts. But more particularly,

To live a godly life, implies, a grateful ſenſe of the many bleſſings we have received from God; who

gave

gave us our beings, who ſo exquiſitely contrived our bodies, and put into them immortal ſpirits, endued with the noble powers of free-will, underſtanding and memory; which render us intellectual and moral agents, capable of thoſe rational pleaſures and enjoyments that all other animals are deſtitute of; who is our daily benefactor, ſupplying us with food and raiment; and innumerable delights and ſatisfactions to gratify our ſenſes, and enliven our ſpirits. And above all, who mercifully ſent his only Son to ſave us from endleſs miſery, and to entitle us, upon eaſy conditions, to new hopes of his favour and of eternal happineſs.

A conſtant dependance and reliance of mind upon God, is another part of living godly. The experience of God's goodneſs naturally creates our dependance on it for the future. The ſcriptures exhort us to this duty, "caſt thy burden upon the "Lord, and he ſhall ſuſtain thee. Bleſſed are all "they that put their truſt in thee." Not but God expects that we ſhould uſe all the means in our power to obtain our wants, and then to hope and pray for his aſſiſtance and bleſſing. This duty conſiſts in a ſettled habit of mind, that will run thro' the whole courſe of a godly life. It will operate on the rich as well as the poor man; the former is not leſs dependent on the providence of God than the latter. If God ſhould withdraw his warm ſunſhine, or his kindly ſhowers and dews, what would become of the produce of his land? Soon would "the heaven over him be as braſs, and the earth "under him as iron." Hence the rich ſhould learn to have an humble dependance on God, for the ſupport and comfort of their lives, and not think themſelves all-ſufficient: and the poor not to deſpond, but to rely on the bleſſing of God's providence upon their honeſt labours and induſtry. And both are taught in the Lord's prayer, to aſk their daily

daily bread from their common father which is in heaven. Again,

To make the glory of God one great end of our actions, is essential to the living godly. To promote his honour, to propagate the true religion and worship of God in the world; to engage men in the love of virtue, truth and goodness; to reprove all kinds of vice and immorality, all disrespect and contempt of God, all false and idolatrous worship; to use his holy name with the greatest reverence, and reprove those who use it profanely; to do all this to the utmost of our power and influence, is to make the glory of God the great end of our lives; for "whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, "we must do all to the glory of God." But to live godly also implies our having a continual sense of God's infinite presence on our minds, by which he perfectly knows all our actions, thoughts and desires. "His eyes are upon man, and sees all his "goings. I the Lord search the heart and try the "reins; and give to every man according to his "ways, and to the fruit of his doings." The consideration of God's infinite knowledge should produce in us, an habitual awe and fear of the divine majesty, which will influence us to an uniform course of virtue and obedience. This single reflection, if duly attended to, will deter us from all wickedness, excite us to the practice of all righteousness, even to the denial of our most favourite inclinations. Fear is a passion of the strongest operation; it was the first passion that awakened Adam after his transgression; he was afraid, and then hid himself. When Joseph's virtue began to stagger, his last refuge was in the fear of God: "How can "I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" It was this that saved his virtue. "Fear God and "keep his commandments, for this is the whole "duty of man." Did we always remember that

God is ever preſent with us, ſees what we are doing, and whoſe eye we can never eſcape; who would dare to do a wicked action, or neglect a good one? Who would not but lead a godly and religious life?

A ſubmiſſive and patient reſignation to God's will, under all troubles and afflictions, is alſo a material part of godlineſs. The great governor of the world has many wiſe and good reaſons for afflicting even good men, which we cannot diſcover, and therefore in all the divine diſpenſations we muſt ſay with "Eli, let him do what ſeemeth him good; "and with Job, the Lord gave, and the Lord hath "taken away, bleſſed be the name of the Lord. "For God does not willingly afflict, nor grieve the "children of men;" but has wiſe and gracious ends of providence to anſwet, tho' we are ignorant of them. The frequent reading of God's holy word, has likewiſe a great tendency to a good life. All ſcripture is given by inſpiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for inſtruction in righteouſneſs, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furniſhed unto all good works. A good man's delight is in the law of the Lord, and he doth meditate therein day and night. There is nothing neceſſary to be known, believed or practiſed, which is not clearly revealed in theſe ſacred volumes. To neglect therefore to read this book of God, ſhews a certain want of that godlineſs, which is the great character of a Chriſtian. Again,

A due regard to God conſiſts in the conſtant performance of divine worſhip, both in private and in public. The worſhip of God appears ſo evident by the light of nature, that all nations have agreed in the practice of it. As God is our creator, preſerver and redeemer, this makes it our indiſpenſible duty, to worſhip and pray to him. The pſalmiſt

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thus directs us? "O come let us worſhip and fall "down, let us kneel before the Lord our maker. "For he is our God." And our Saviour ſays, "thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, and him "only ſhalt thou ſerve." And St. Paul bids us "be careful for nothing, (ſo as to be over anxious, "or diſtruſt providence) but in every thing by pray-"er and ſupplication, with thankſgiving let your re-"queſt be made known unto God." Prayer is both an act of religion, by which God is honoured, and is alſo a proper means of ſupplying our neceſſities. For to praiſe him for his glorious excellencies; to thank him for his great benefits; to confeſs our ſins and implore his mercy and forgiveneſs; to make our humble ſupplications to him for the ſupply of all our wants; this is truly and properly the buſineſs of prayer.

But then we are to prefer public worſhip to private, becauſe in the nature of the thing, it tends more to promote the honour of God, as it is performed in the preſence of many witneſſes, and with greater ſolemnity. There is a peculiar force, ſolemnity, and beauty in public worſhip, which is not to be found in what is private and ſecret. This is "worſhipping God in the beauty of holineſs, and "giving him the glory due unto his name." But I muſt not omit another part of devotion, that of family worſhip. And the ſame arguments that eſtabliſh public worſhip may be urged for this, becauſe every family is a little church or congregation of Chriſtians; and the miniſter of this church is the father or ruler of the family, whoſe right and authority is founded on the law of nature. By virtue of this truſt, every maſter of a family is anſwerable to God, for the performance of divine worſhip within his little juriſdiction. Thus Joſhua reſolved, "as for me and my houſe, we will ſerve the "Lord." The regular diſcharge of this duty, will

be attended with great advantages. It is the ſureſt way to procure God's favour and protection, and to bring down his bleſſings upon all our undertakings. It will naturally beget in our children and ſervants, a reverence for God, and things ſacred; it will ſeaſon their minds with religion, lead them into habits of virtue, ſobriety and honeſty, by the frequent thoughts of God and another world, which otherwiſe they would ſeldom think of. And this duty with regard to the world, will procure credit, eſteem and honour. For they who do not love religion themſelves, will yet reſpect thoſe who do. This conſtant regard to God in family worſhip, is a neceſſary branch of godly living, and will be found in every family, where the maſter has a true ſenſe of religion upon his heart.

The great motive offered by St. Paul to inforce this duty is the looking for that bleſſed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt; who gave himſelf for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Here we plainly ſee, that the deſign of our Saviour's death, was not merely to ſave us from the puniſhment of our ſins, without repentance and reformation; but to prepare us for the heavenly happineſs, by the practice of all thoſe excellent virtues he has taught us by the goſpel, and his own example, and by which his followers are to be diſtinguiſhed from the profeſſors of all other religions. Chriſtians ſo qualified by ſanctity of life and purity of heart; who deny all ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and live ſoberly, righteouſly and godly in this preſent world, may juſtly look for that bleſſed hope, and glorious appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt. And a bleſſed hope this is; as its object is the higheſt happineſs our nature can poſſibly enjoy, "ſuch as eye hath

"not

" not ſeen, nor hath it entered into the heart of " man to conceive." It is alſo a bleſſed hope, in regard to the certainty of attaining it, becauſe it is founded on the promiſe of God, who cannot lye; which " hope we have as an anchor of the ſoul, " both ſure and ſtedfaſt."

And ſuppoſing it ſhould coſt us ſome trouble and pains to govern our paſſions and ſenſual appetites; to live ſoberly, temperately, and chaſtely; and that by paying our juſt debts, and doing acts of charity, we ſhould take ſomewhat from our luxury, equipage, and the pride of life; nay, that by being ſtrictly honeſt and juſt, we ſhould leave ourſelves a ſmaller income; for this is to practiſe righteouſneſs: Or, that we ſhould conquer our idleneſs and averſion to devotion, and oblige ourſelves to be conſtant in our public and private worſhip of God, without which we cannot live godly; I ſay, ſuppoſing that all this will require ſome pains and trouble, yet ſhall we not be great gainers in the end? And will not the bleſſed hope that is ſet before us, abundantly make amends for all this? If men will riſe early and ſet up late, deny their ſleep, their food and recreations, in purſuit of worldly advantages, and think themſelves well paid if they do but ſucceed; and yet will take no pains to pleaſe and ſerve God, to deny their luſts, to live up to the rules of the goſpel, and the holy religion they profeſs, and reject this bleſſed hope; what can be ſaid, but that their eternal ruin is their own choice, and they run into it with their eyes open.

Diſcourſe XCV. Dr. *Clarke.*

Of PREDESTINATION and ELECTION.

Rom. ix. 23, 24.

And that he might make known the riches of his glory, on the veſſels of mercy, which he had before prepared unto glory: even us whom he he hath called, not of the Jews only, but alſo of the Gentiles.

THERE is no part of ſcripture more difficult to be underſtood, more miſapplied by the ignorant, more wreſted by the learned, and more falſely interpreted by melancholy pious perſons, than this chapter of St. Paul. And tho' ſome have greatly perplexed themſelves by picking out ſome expreſſions, concerning God's electing the children yet unborn, who had neither done good nor evil; concerning "his loving Jacob, and hating Eſau; "his hardening Pharaoh; and ſhewing mercy on "whom he will have mercy; and having compaſ-"ſion on whom he will have compaſſion;" and of his having the ſame power over mankind as the potter has over the clay, to make one veſſel to honour, another to diſhonour: yet it is clearly evident from the beginning and end of the chapter, that the apoſtle's deſign is not to ſpeak concerning any decree of God, with reſpect to the final and eternal ſtate of particular perſons; but only to declare both the ſovereign power and juſtice of God, in diſtributing to different nations, in diverſe ages, what particular advantages he pleaſes; and revealing his will to them, when, and in what manner he thinks fit. As the

the beginning of the chapter the apoſtle expreſly declares, that the aim and intention of his diſcourſe, was, God's rejecting the Gentiles, and calling the Jews; and at the end he ſums this up, as the concluſion deſigned. The intermediate parts, and the examples therein alledged, are nothing but ſimilitudes and illuſtrations of this argument; and the words of the text are a very clear declaration of this his intention.

The apoſtle here expreſsly declares, that he does not mean, by the veſſels of mercy, prepared afore of God unto glory, of which he had been treating in the former chapter, any particular perſons choſen unconditionally to eternal ſalvation; but the whole body of Chriſtians, even us whom he has called, and who obeyed that call by believing in Chriſt; not from among the Jews only, but alſo of the Gentiles. They were called to receive that grace and mercy, and to embrace thoſe advantages of the goſpel, which the Jews rejected, and therefore became veſſels of wrath, fitted for deſtruction. And tho' we are at preſent the veſſels of mercy, yet if we live unworthy of the goſpel, we can have no reaſon to expect, ſince God ſpared not the Jews, the natural branches, that he will ſpare us, who were engraſted after their fall. In the foregoing part of this epiſtle, the apoſtle had ſhewn at large, that the Gentiles by acting contrary to the law of nature, and the Jews by diſobeying the law given them from heaven, became both equally liable to the wrath of God. For God being no reſpecter of perſons, "as many as ſinned without "law, ſhall periſh without law; and as many as have "ſinned in the law, ſhall be judged by the law."

That both theſe laws being inſufficient to preſerve men from ſin, or to recover them to God, the apoſtle therefore aſſures us, that both Jews and Gentiles were obliged to believe in Chriſt; and to obey the gracious terms of the goſpel, as the only

means of juſtification for the future. "For ſince all "have ſinned and come ſhort of the glory of God, "they can only be juſtified freely by his grace, thro' "the redemption that is in Chriſt Jeſus." That is, all being ſinners, none of them can claim ſalvation by the merit of their obedience, but merely from the gracious pardon of ſin, freely granted to penitents, thro' faith in Chriſt. That this juſtification by faith without works, that is, by the obedience of the goſpel alone, without the ceremonies of the law, was abundantly ſufficient, being the ſame faith by which Abraham had been juſtified. That this juſtification by the faith and obedience of the goſpel, affords much greater aſſurance of preſent peace and reconciliation with God, and of eternal life and glory hereafter, than the law could do. "For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his ſon, much more being now juſtified by his blood, we ſhall be ſaved from wrath thro' him." That this free juſtification by grace thro' the faith of the goſpel, without the ceremonies of the Moſaic inſtitution, obliges men to a ſtricter obedience, to greater purity and holineſs of life than the law had done; Chriſtians being now "made free "from ſin, and become the ſervants of righteouſneſs; "are dead unto ſin, but alive unto God, thro' Jeſus "Chriſt our Lord. That the law of Moſes was not able to deliver men from the bondage and ſlavery of ſin, from "the law in their body warring againſt the law of their mind, and bringing them into captivity to the law of ſin;" but that the goſpel having "delivered men from the body of this death, from "the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty "of the children of God;" enabled them to prevail over the temptations of ſin, and all the perſecutions and powers of the world. "For the law of the ſpirit of life in Chriſt Jeſus, hath made us free from the

the law of ſin and death.--And we are more than conquerors, thro' him that loved us.

The apoſtle having largely proved theſe particulars in the beginning of this epiſtle, proceeds in the ixth chapter to anſwer a ſtrong objection, which he knew would be raiſed by the unbelieving Jews, againſt what he had ſaid. For if his doctrine here was true, then whoſoever of the Jews rejected the goſpel, notwithſtanding they were deſcended from the patriarchs to whom the promiſes were made; and that they were God's peculiar people; notwithſtanding that to them were committed the prophecies and oracles of God, and that to them pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the ſervice of God, and the promiſes; yet notwithſtanding all this, it would follow, that they were ſtill out of the way of ſalvation; tho' zealous obſervers of the ceremonial law, unleſs they believed in Chriſt and obeyed the goſpel, which is the righteouſneſs of faith. The Jews thought this doctrine impoſſible, and contrary to the promiſes of God, made to their fathers, and therefore imputed it to the apoſtle's zeal and prejudice againſt them, ſince his being converted to Chriſtianity. To this objection, he replies, in this chapter, by ſhewing that there was no injuſtice in God, no breach of promiſe, no change of his will, in rejecting the unbelieving Jews, and receiving the Gentiles; ſince the promiſe was not originally made to all the children of Abraham, but to Iſaac only, and of his ſons only to Jacob; and all were not Iſrael, which were of Iſrael; for a remnant only was to be ſaved. And during the whole period of the law, God had mercy on whom he would have mercy, and compaſſion on whom he would have compaſſion. That is, not on the whole people, but on whom he pleaſed, who was the alone competent and infallible judge, to diſtinguiſh ſuch

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as were ſtedfaſt in their faith and fidelity to him. And whom he would he hardened: that is, he choſe out of obſtinate and incorrigible offenders whom he pleaſed, to make examples of his wrath and vengeance. Since this, ſaith the apoſtle, was the method of God's proceeding from the beginning, much more might God juſtly reject unbelievers, at the coming of the Meſſiah, who was the end of the law; and reckon only thoſe, the true children of Abraham who imitated his faith and obedience; making known the riches of his glory, on the veſſels of mercy, which he had before prepared unto glory; even us whom he has called, not of the Jews only, but alſo of the Gentiles.

The apoſtle's principal argument being thus explained, we may the more eaſily underſtand thoſe other parts of his diſcourſe in this chapter, which have been ſo often miſtaken and miſapplied. He begins with an apology for himſelf, that in this doctrine of the rejection of the Jews, he was no way influenced by any prejudice or hatred againſt his countrymen, ſince his converſion to Chriſtianity. On the contrary, he moſt ſolemnly calls God to witneſs, that his grief and trouble of mind, for their impenitency and incredulity, for their rejection, and the judgments God would ſend them, was greater and more uneaſy to him, than all other afflictions and calamities, he ever met with. I ſay the truth in Chriſt, ſays he, I lye not——that I have great heavineſs and continual ſorrow in my heart; for I could wiſh that myſelf were accurſed from Chriſt, for my brethren, my kinſmen, according to the fleſh. Tho' this expreſſion is highly figurative and affectionate, yet ſome pious, but melancholy perſons, have been diſturbed at it, as if St. Paul's wiſh was inimitable; whoſe example, if a Chriſtian can in no caſe follow, he may be apt to accuſe himſelf of want of charity: and yet to follow

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it in any caſe, ſeems terrible and ſhocking even to the ſtrongeſt affection, and the moſt fervent zeal. For, though for a good man, one would even dare to die, yet for a man to become ſubject to the curſe and diſpleaſure of God; this ſeems beyond the bounds even of Chriſtian charity, either to deſire or ſubmit to. The apoſtle's meaning, therefore, has been greatly miſunderſtood; for his intention in this paſſage was not to wiſh for the eternal wrath of God, but to wiſh, that if it was poſſible he, by bearing himſelf thoſe temporal judgments, which he ſaw were coming upon the Jews, on account of their being accurſed from Chriſt, through their obſtinacy and incredulity, might be a means to reſtore them again, to the favour of God, and to be his peculiar people. He was ſo far from bearing any hatred or ill will to the Jews, that he could willingly ſuffer for them, and in their ſtead, if he could thereby prevent their rejection, and being accurſed from Chriſt. "I could wiſh, ſays "he, that myſelf were accurſed from Chriſt, for my "brethren, my kinſmen according to the fleſh." This plainly ſhews, that what follows in this chapter does not relate to any predeſtination of particular perſons to eternal happineſs or miſery, but wholly concerns the rejection of the Jewiſh nation for their infidelity, and the calling in of the Gentiles by the goſpel. In this ſenſe, his apology for himſelf is very pertinent, and neceſſary to introduce a diſcourſe, which he knew would be extremely ungrateful to the Jewiſh nation. But no ſenſe at all can be made of this apology, by any other interpretation. For if he was ſpeaking of predeſtinate or reprobate perſons, who muſt be ſelected both from Jews or Gentiles, and yet could not be particularly known in this life; it could be of no ſervice for him to expreſs ſuch heavineſs and

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ſorrow of heart, for the rejection of the whole people of the Jews.

This then being his true deſign, he proceeds to ſhew at the ſixth verſe, that there was no injuſtice, no breach of promiſe in God, for rejecting the unbelieving Jews, and receiving the Gentiles in their room; in regard the original promiſe to their father Abraham, by which they were entitled to become God's peculiar people, was not made to all *his* poſterity, but to the ſeed of Iſaac only. For God did not ſeem to intend, that his promiſe ſhould take place in Abraham's deſcendants according to the fleſh; but in thoſe, who by a faith, or fidelity like his, were in a true ſenſe his children and followers. The promiſe of God therefore is not made void by this new diſpenſation. Since according to the original intent of the promiſe made to Abraham, children of the Gentiles, who imitated the faith and moral obedience of that patriarch, were more truly his children, than his unbelieving poſterity the Jews according to the fleſh.

The apoſtle farther illuſtrates this argument, by a ſtill more eminent example. For if, ſaith he, not only among the children of Abraham, but alſo among the poſterity of Iſaac, that child of the promiſe, God was pleaſed to confine the promiſe to Jacob in excluſion of Eſau, even before either of them was born; much more may God now, without injuſtice, confine his promiſe to ſuch only as believe in God, and obey his revealed will; excluſive of thoſe, who continue in unbelief, and obſtinately reject the ſalvation, which God hath offered them; notwithſtanding they are the poſterity of Jacob, and in other reſpects, equal to them who do believe; according to theſe words, ver. 11. "The children being not yet born, neither "having done any good or evil; that the pur-

"poſe

" poſe of God according to election might ſtand,
" not of works, but of him that calleth; it was
" ſaid unto Rebecca, the elder ſhall ſerve the
" younger, as it is written, Jacob have I loved,
" but Eſau have I hated." The only difficulty in this paſſage is, what is meant by the purpoſe of God. Many imagine it is his chuſing ſome particular perſons, unconditionately to eternal life, and others to eternal deſtruction. But the apoſtle on the contrary, ſays, that he meant God's purpoſe of appointing the elder of Iſaac's ſons to ſerve the younger, not ſo much in their perſons, as in their poſterity; and therefore God made this appointment before they were born. The uſe the apoſtle makes of this inſtance, is to prevent an objection of the unbelieving Jews; who ſince they could not deny, but notwithſtanding all the promiſes made to Abraham and Iſaac, that God might in this ſenſe, without any injuſtice, hate and reject Eſau; ſo conſequently they could not in reaſon charge God with any unrighteouſneſs, in alſo rejecting the unbelieving Jews. " What ſhall we
" ſay then? Is there unrighteouſneſs with God?
" God forbid." ver. 14.

To the ſame purpoſe he urges in the following verſes, what God had declared to Moſes and to Pharoah. If God declared to Moſes, that he would have mercy on whom he would have mercy, and would have compaſſion on whom he would have compaſſion; that is, to ſhew mercy and compaſſion, how and in what manner he judged fit, who is the only proper and unerring judge; for the ſame reaſon now alſo, ſays the apoſtle, neither is it of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, to chuſe in what method God ſhall bring men to ſalvation; but it is of God only, that ſheweth mercy, who hath right to appoint how, to whom, and in what manner he will ſhew it.

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For in human judicatories, ſhould any one find fault with the ſentence of an able judge, might not the judge very properly ſay, "I will "acquit whom I ſee fit to acquit, and I will con- "demn whom I ſee fit to condemn?" Not that he would do it arbitrarily, but that as he had the moſt perfect knowledge of the law and the fact, his ſentence ought not to be queſtioned by unſkilful ſpectators. And of old, God did the ſame; he choſe out of incorrigible offenders, whom he thought fit, to make public examples of his wrath and vengeance. Thus God hardened Pharoah; (as he tempted David in the ſame manner, by permitting Satan to do it) not by making or decreeing him to be wicked, God forbid; but he being obſtinately wicked, God raiſed or ſupported him in power and deferred deſtroying him, that he might ſhew his power on him, and that his name might be declared throughout all the earth; that ſo Pharoah's obſtinacy and puniſhment might be known to the world. And if God did in former times act thus, is there, ſays the apoſtle, any injuſtice in God, in chuſing now to make the impenitent and unbelieving Jews, (who are only the more hardened by his judgments, and his invitations to embrace the goſpel, inſtead of being brought to repentance) examples of his ſeverity and wrath, notwithſtanding their being the poſterity of Abraham; and to do this, even at the ſame time, that he reſolves to have mercy on ſuch of the Gentiles, as will obey the goſpel he invites them to receive.

The apoſtle proceeds to an objection, which he knew the unbelieving Jews would make. "Thou "wilt then ſay unto me, why doth he yet find "fault? For who hath reſiſted his will? If God "reſolve to reject and to deſtroy us, as he did "Pharoah, why doth he blame us for being reject-
"ed?"

" ed?" To this he anſwers: Firſt, " but, O " man, who art thou that replieſt againſt God? " Shall the thing formed, ſay to him that formed " it, why haſt thou made me thus? Hath not " the potter power over the clay, of the ſame " lump to make one veſſel to honour, and ano- " ther to diſhonour?" That is, not that God could originally create one man unconditionally to eternal life, and another on purpoſe for eternal miſery; but the plain meaning is, that God has as much power and right, to puniſh or reject one nation or people, and receive or exalt another, upon what terms he judges moſt fit and reaſonable; as the potter has to form and mould his clay into any ſhape. But ſecondly, the apoſtle makes this direct reply; that the rejected Jews had no reaſon to murmur againſt the power and will of God; for though it was indeed his abſolute will and power to puniſh when and as he thought fit; yet it was their own obſtinacy and impenitency only, that made them to be rejected and puniſhed at all. " What if God, willing to ſhew his wrath, and make his power known, endured with much long ſuffering the veſſels of wrath fitted to deſtruction?" The words with much long ſuffering, clearly prove, that the rejected veſſels of wrath were not deſtroyed, till God had long waited for their repentance and amendment; which ſhews it was not determined before. And then he adds, " and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the veſſels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory; even us whom he has called, not of the Jews only, but alſo of the Gentiles?" The veſſels of mercy are not particular perſons; but us, whom he has called, the whole body of Chriſtians, in oppoſition to the whole nation of the rejected unbelieving Jews. Which is alſo further evident from his ſumming up the whole argument,

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"What ſhall we ſay then? that the Gentiles which followed not after righteouſneſs, have attained to righteouſneſs, even the righteouſneſs that is of faith; but Iſrael, which followed after the law of righteouſneſs, hath not attained to the law of righteouſneſs." Why was this? but becauſe they ſought it not by faith, (that is, by embracing the goſpel) but as it were by the works of the Moſaic law. All which he farther explains in the 10th and 11th chapters. I ſhall now make a few practical obſervations from what has been ſaid.

And from hence let all ſuch pious perſons as are afraid, that after all their moſt earneſt endeavours to obey the will of God, by a life of virtue and true holineſs, that yet they ſhall not be of the number of thoſe veſſels of mercy, whom he has afore prepared unto glory; learn how to have their doubts removed, by conſidering that theſe paſſages of ſcripture, from which ſome have laboured to eſtabliſh the doctrine of abſolute and unconditional decrees, do plainly appear to have been greatly miſinterpreted; and that by the veſſels of mercy St. Paul means, not particular perſons, choſen out of the bulk of mankind; but the whole body of Chriſtians, the univerſal church of Chriſt, in oppoſition to the whole Jewiſh nation. On the other hand, let ſuch as preſumptouſly think themſelves ſecure, in the bare profeſſion of Chriſtianity, becauſe the whole body of Chriſtians are ſtiled in ſcripture, the elect, the election, the veſſels of mercy; from hence learn and take notice, that as St. Paul, from Iſaiah obſerves, that when the whole nation of the Jews were the choſen and peculiar people of God, yet out of them a remnant only were to be finally ſaved: ſo now, through the whole body of Chriſtians, through God's gracious offers of mercy to them in Chriſt, are ſtiled in ſcripture the election

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of grace; yet only thoſe who live worthy of ſo excellent a profeſſion, by the practice of true virtue, righteouſneſs, and holineſs, ſhall finally be made partakers of the benefit thereof. For as Chriſt choſe, or elected twelve diſciples, and yet one of them proved a devil, and the ſon of perdition; ſo notwithſtanding all Chriſtians are the veſſels of mercy prepared of God afore unto glory, yet if any one draws back, he ſhall loſe the benefit of that preparation; he ſhall finally be rejected, and not made partaker of the goſpel ſalvation.

" We may from hence alſo learn, that the true ſcripture doctrine of election and reprobation is this, that it pleaſed the almighty of his own free grace and mercy, to determine before the world was, to invite the Gentiles, as well as Jews, to repentance and faith, in his only begotten ſon, at the time appointed for his appearing among men; and it pleaſed him to decree, that all who ſhould obey his invitation, ſhould be aſſiſted here with his grace, and obtain eternal glory; whilſt thoſe who abuſed and rejected his mercy, ſhould ſuffer the ſevere puniſhments due to their impenitency, both in this world and the next. So that this decree is both general and conditional; it does not perſonally relate to any one, but in general to all, to whom the glad tidings of the goſpel have been brought. And as to another life, it is not abſolute, without regard to the actions of men; but conditionally founded on their faith and obedience. The divulging the goſpel, to ſome men and nations, and not to others, is matter of mere grace and favour, and is to be reſolved into the divine wiſdom and goodneſs. No man can merit this at the hands of God, for all have ſinned and offended him. But the election of thoſe who embrace the faith, thereby to inherit the promiſes hereafter, will depend on their having on the wedding-garment of faith and charity; for thoſe rewards

will be diſtributed to every man, only according to his works.

This interpretation has one conſiderable advantage, in that it makes the ſcriptures conſiſtent with themſelves. In this light, their invitations are merciful, their threatnings awakening, their perſuaſions powerful, and their promiſes engaging. But the contrary doctrine of a previous determination of every man's eternal ſtate, without regard to his actions, is not only ſubverſive of the firſt principles of natural reaſon and religion, but a direct contradiction to the whole new teſtament; if that be true, the bleſſed Jeſus muſt have invited many to obey him, whom he knew could not; the moving eloquence of St. Paul to obedience, is empty ſound, the denunciations of the apoſtle are vain words; and the promiſes of God, of none effect. For none of theſe can make an alteration in any man's ſtate, if it was before predeſtinated; and no man will on their account be either the better or worſe. If then, as our church obſerves, in the concluſion of her article on this ſubject, we are ſo to receive the promiſes of God, as they are generally ſet forth in the holy ſcriptures, then there will be no room for ſpiritual pride on the one hand, or deſpair on the other. The ſcriptures found the difference of our future and eternal ſtate, on our own free choice and conduct. There is nothing in them on God's part, that favours of relentleſs cruelty; nothing that, if rightly underſtood, can give the leaſt ſanction to vice, or diſcountenance the loweſt degrees of virtue. There is nothing in the ſcriptures, that can raiſe the minds of the virtuous to inſolence and contempt, or ſink the ſoul of the moſt humble Chriſtian into deſponding ſorrow. There is no foundation for the beſt of men, to think themſelves good enough, and therefore to ceaſe from working; no authority for the worſt ſo to give themſelves up for loſt, as to reject the

the calls and opportunities, which boundleſs clemency offers them, of repentance. There is nothing in them but what may juſtly humble the greateſt ſaint, if he conſiders the example that is ſet before him, and how ſhort he falls of it. Nothing but what may rejoice the heart of the ſincere penitent, and fill it with admiration and tranſport. "O the depth "of the riches of the goodneſs of God!" how infinite are his condeſcentions! how unmeaſurable is his mercy! how amazing his ineſtimable love!

Diſcourſe XCVI. Abp. *Tillotſon.*

Of a GOOD CONSCIENCE, towards GOD and MEN.

Acts xxiv. 16.

And herein do I exerciſe myſelf, to have always a conſcience void of offences toward God and towards men.

THE apoſtle here gives us the extent of a good man's pious practice. It hath regard to the whole compaſs of his duty, both to God and man, in which there muſt be conſtancy and perſeverance. St. Paul exerciſed himſelf to have always a conſcience void of offence, in the whole courſe of his life. We muſt not only make conſcience of our ways by fits and ſtarts, but in all our actions without intermiſſion. There are ſome who will refrain from groſſer ſins, and be very ſtrict at ſome ſeaſons; as during the time of a ſolemn repentance, and before the receiving the ſacrament; and when theſe are over, they return to their former lewd and vicious courſe. But religion requires a conſtant frame, an habitual temper of mind, influencing all our actions, during our whole lives, and in which we muſt uſe a very earneſt care and endeavour; we muſt ſtudy to underſtand our duty, to be rightly informed concerning good and evil, that we miſtake not the nature of things. We muſt apply our minds in good earneſt, to be well inſtructed in all parts of our duty, in order to the practice of it; and when we know it, we muſt be very careful and conſcientious in the diſcharge

charge and performance of it. We muſt not only reſolve to follow the dictates and direction of our conſcience, but muſt alſo be careful to inform our conſcience aright, that we may not in any thing neglect our duty, or tranſgreſs the law of God. As conſcience is the great principle of moral actions, and our guide in matters of ſin and duty; I ſhall endeavour briefly to give the true notion of it. Every man is repreſented to have a kind of court and tribunal in his own breaſt, where he tries himſelf, and all his actions; this is called the court of a man's conſcience. Conſcience is the accuſer, the record, and regiſter of our crimes, in which the memory of them is preſerved; and it is alſo the witneſs which gives teſtimony for and againſt us, the judge which declares the law, and what we ought to do, or not to have done in all caſes, and paſſeth ſentence upon us, by acquitting or condemning us. So that conſcience is the court, the bench, and the bar; the accuſer, witneſs, and judge. But at preſent I ſhall only conſider conſcience, as a principle or faculty, whereby we judge of moral good and evil, and which directs and governs our actions. Conſcience then is nothing elſe, but the judgment of a man's own mind, concerding the morality of his actions, as to what is good, evil, or indifferent. I proceed to give ſome directions for the keeping a good conſcience void of offence.

And firſt, we muſt never act contrary to the perſuaſion and conviction of our own conſcience, for that is a great ſin, as it offends the conſcience, and renders us guilty; guilt being nothing elſe, but trouble in our minds, ariſing from a conſciouſneſs of having acted contrary to what we are perſuaded was our duty. So that we ſhould be very careful not to offend againſt the conviction of our own mind; as alſo to inform our conſciences rightly, that we

may not wilfully miſtake in our duty. This rule is the more neceſſary, becauſe ſome men are apt to think, that whatever they do according to their conſcience, may be juſtified. But this will appear to be a dangerous miſtake, and fatal to the ſouls of men; if we conſider, that men may be guilty of the moſt heinous ſins in following an erroneous conſcience. Men may do ſome of the worſt and moſt wicked things in the world, with a perſuaſion that they do well. Our Saviour told his diſciples, that "the Jews ſhould put them to death, thinking they did God good ſervice." Nay, they murdered the ſon of God himſelf, through ignorance and a falſe perſuaſion of mind. And our bleſſed Lord prayed his father to forgive them, 'for they know not what they do.' St. Paul tells us, 'that he verily thought with himſelf, that he 'ought to do many things againſt the name of Jeſus.' And though he acted herein according to the perſuaſion of his conſcience, yet he ſays, that he had been a blaſphemer, a perſecutor, a murderer, and even the greateſt of ſinners. And theſe ſins proceeding from an erroneous conſcience may prove damnable, without a particular repentance for them. Indeed,

Ignorance and miſtake makes the perſon more capable of forgiveneſs; therefore our Saviour prayed, "father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And St. Paul obtained mercy, becauſe he did it ignorantly, and in unbelief; that is, thro' a falſe perſuaſion of mind, not believing it to be a ſin. But tho' the Jews ignorantly crucified Chriſt, yet St. Peter exhorts them to a particular and deep repentance for it, as neceſſary to pardon and forgiveneſs. "I wot, ſays he, that thro' ignorance ye did it, as did alſo your rulers, therefore repent ye, and be converted, that your ſins may be blotted out." So that men ſhould not be hurried

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away by unreaſonable prejudice and paſſion, without a due and calm examination of things; nor be governed by pride, humour, partiality, intereſt, or a furious and extravagant zeal; becauſe the more we contribute to our error, the greater our guilt will be. Indeed where our error is involuntary and morally invincible, God will make allowance for it; but where it proceeds from our own faults and neglects, we ſhould rectify our miſtake. For we muſt anſwer to God, whatever we do, by virtue of that falſe perſuaſion, altho' we did it according to the dictate of our conſcience.

In all doubts of conſcience we muſt endeavour to be equal and impartial, and as willing to receive ſatisfaction of our doubts in one kind, as in another. For it looks very ſuſpicious, when mens doubts and ſcruples bear all on one ſide; eſpecially, if it be againſt charity, peace and obedience to government, eccleſiaſtical or civil; in this caſe, a mere doubt, much more a ſcruple, ought to be over-ruled, by the command of authority, the opinion and judgment of wiſe and good men, in conſideration of the public peace, the unity and edification of the church. Not that a man is to act againſt the clear conviction of his own mind, but only when he doubts of a thing's being lawful, or unlawful, it ſeems reaſonable, he ſhould ſuffer a mere doubt or ſcruple, to be over-ruled by the weighty conſiderations before-mentioned. In truth all pretences of conſcience are highly to be ſuſpected, which are accompanied with turbulent paſſions and furious zeal, it being great odds, but ſuch a man's conſcience is in the wrong. The wrath of man worketh not the righteouſneſs of God: The paſſions of men are no proper inſtruments to promote religion, or that which is good. None are ſo likely to judge amiſs, as men who are blinded by their paſſions, who are tranſported with a wild

zeal, and pretend conſcience for their fury. Would men carefully obſerve, they might eaſily know when they act upon reaſon, and a true principle of conſcience. To rage, and be confident, is a ſure ſign that a man is in the wrong; becauſe this plainly ſhews, that his conſcience is not governed by reaſon, but by intereſt, humour, or diſcontent. Is a man in the right? he is happy, and hath reaſon to be pleaſed, but none to be angry. If he hath reaſon on his ſide, he can deſire no more; why then is he in a paſſion?

Of the great evil and miſtake of this furious kind of zeal, the Jews are a ſad example, in their behaviour to our Saviour, and his apoſtles. St. Paul perſecuted the Chriſtians, from a falſe and erroneous perſuaſion of his conſcience. I perſecuted, (ſays he) this way unto the death, binding and delivering into priſon both men and women.——I thought with myſelf, that I ought to do many things againſt the name of Jeſus. And many of the ſaints I ſhut up in priſon, and when they were put to death, I gave my voice againſt them, and puniſhed them oft in every ſynagogue, and compelled them to blaſpheme; and being exceeding mad againſt them, I perſecuted them even to ſtrange cities. Conſcience can hardly ever be right, when it tranſports men with ſuch furious zeal and paſſion. All pretences of conſcience are to be ſuſpected, which are not accompanied with modeſty and humility, a teachable temper and diſpoſition, willing to learn, and to be informed. A proud and conceited temper is moſt likely to run into miſtakes; becauſe pride and ſelf-conceit keep out knowledge, and prevent wiſdom and inſtruction from taking place. Above all, let us be ſure to mind what is our plain and certain duty; that great things wherein the life and ſubſtance of religion doth conſiſt, and thoſe alſo which make for peace, and whereby

whereby we may edify one another. But let not leſſer matters prejudice or hinder our main duty. Let it be our great care not to fail in the two great commandments of the law, the love of God, and of our neighbour. Let us be ſtrict and conſtant in our piety and devotion towards God; chaſte and temperate, juſt and honeſt, kind and charitable, humble and meek, patient and peaceable towards all men; ſubmiſſive and obedient to our ſuperiors, natural, civil, and ſpiritual. A due regard to theſe great virtues of the Chriſtian life, is to keep a conſcience void of offence, both towards God and man. I now proceed,

To enforce the great motive and encouragement to this conſcientious care of our lives and actions, which St. Paul tells us, was his belief of a reſurrection, and of the rewards and puniſhments conſequent upon it. "I have hope (ſays he) towards "God, that there ſhall be a reſurrection of the juſt "and the unjuſt; for this reaſon, I exerciſe myſelf "to have always a conſcience void of offence to-"wards God, and towards men." If we believe the reſurrection of the dead, and a future judgment, we muſt be careful now to diſcharge a good conſcience, that we may render a good account hereafter; that we may be ſincere, and without offence, with reſpect to the day of Chriſt. For nothing will then raiſe our hearts ſo much, and make us lift up our heads with joy, like that of a good conſcience, and the teſtimony of it, that in all ſimplicity and godly ſincerity, we have had our converſation in the world. On the contrary; when we come to appear before the great judge of the world, nothing will fill our minds with ſo much terror, and our faces with ſo much confuſion, as the clamours of a guilty conſcience; which will be more than a thouſand witneſſes againſt us, and will anticipate our condemnation, and paſs a ſentence on

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us, almoſt as ſevere as the judge himſelf. The perpetual regret and remorſe of a ſinner's own mind, will be one of the principal ingredients of his miſery and torment. This conſideration ought to have a mighty influence on us, and make us very careful, to have conſciences void of offence now, that we may be free from torment and anguiſh hereafter.

The firm belief of a future ſtate of eternal happineſs or miſery, is what gives weight and motion to thoſe two powerful principles of human activity, the hopes and fears of men. There is no one but one time or other is very ſenſible of the true force of theſe arguments; but the misfortune is, inſtead of leading ſome men to repentance, they drive them to infidelity. For being reſolved upon an evil courſe, ſince they cannot reconcile their practice with ſuch principles as theſe, they will fit their principles to their practice; and ſo will not believe the rewards and puniſhments of another world, leſt this ſhould diſturb them in their courſe. Vain men! as if heaven and hell muſt needs vaniſh and diſappear, becauſe ſome witty wicked men will not believe them. Such as theſe are infidels in their own defence, to quiet their own minds, that their conſciences may not perpetually fly in their faces. A right belief, and an evil conſcience, are unſuitable companions, and muſt needs live very uneaſy together. He that believes the principles of religion, and is conſcious he lives contrary to them, can have no peace nor quiet in his mind. And beſides the future reward of a holy conſcientious courſe, it hath alſo the preſent peace and ſatisfaction of our own minds; which will be matter of great joy, and unſpeakable comfort, not only under the ſoreſt afflictions and calamities of life, but even at the hour of death; when the miſeries of life oppreſs

preſs us, and the ſorrows and pangs of death are ready to take hold of us.

There is certainly no ſuch comfort under the evils and afflictions of this life, as our own innocency and integrity. When we are afflicted, it muſt be a mighty conſolation t us, to be conſcious of our own ſincerity. For tho' no man can plead perfect innocency, yet as to the general courſe of an unblameable life, a good man may appear to God; and even when he afflicts him, may look upon him, as a tender compaſſionate father, not as an angry, revengeful judge. Thus did holy Job under all his calamities, in ſome meaſure comfort himſelf. When he had loſt all he had, and was forſaken of all other comforts, even the good opinion of his friends concerning his ſincerity; in theſe ſad and diſconſolate circumſtances, nothing but the conſcience of his own ſincerity bore up his ſpirit. I will not, ſays he, remove mine integrity from me, my righteouſneſs will I hold faſt, and will not let it go; mine heart ſhall not reproach me, ſo long as I live. When every thing elſe was gone, his integrity ſupported him to the laſt.

As to perſecutions and ſuffering from men, our own innocency, and the goodneſs of our cauſe, will be our beſt comfort; when we are not conſcious, that we have deſerved them, and are inwardly aſſured, that whatever we ſuffer for God and a good conſcience, will one day work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. This was what ſupported the firſt Chriſtians, the noble army of martyrs, under thoſe cruel perſecutions, which, otherwiſe, no human patience could have endured. Our rejoicing, ſays St. Paul, is this, that in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity, we have had our converſation in this world. And thus under cauſeleſs calumnies and reproaches of men, if we can but approve our conſciences to God, the uncharitable cenſures

cenſures of men are not much to be regarded. If our hearts condemn us not, we may have confidence towards God, and much more towards men. If God and our own conſciences acquit us, we may eaſily bear the ſlanders and hard cenſures of men. Above all, the comfort of a good conſcience is of the greateſt ſervice at the hour of death. The guilt of an evil conſcience is then moſt dreadful. As nothing revives and raiſes the fainting ſpirits of a dying man, ſo much as the conſcience of a holy and uſeful life; ſo nothing more dejects a man's ſpirit, and fills him with terror and anguiſh, than for a ſinner to reflect on what he hath done, and what he is like to ſuffer. The wicked is driven away in his wickedneſs, he is carried out of the world, as it were, in a ſtorm and tempeſt; but the righteous hath hope in his death, he dies calmly and comfortable. "Mark the perfect man, and "behold the upright, for the end of that man is "peace."

If he is conſcious of having ſincerely endeavoured to keep God's commandments, and to pleaſe him; if he hath lived inoffenſively, in all good conſcience before God and men; what an unſpeakable conſolation muſt it be to him in that gloomy time, when he is walking thro' the ſhadow of death, that he fears no evil; that he is able to look death in the face, with the courage and conſtancy of St. Paul; and to ſay with him, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finiſhed my race, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteouſneſs, which the Lord the righteous judge, ſhall give me at that day." A comfortable death, free from the ſtings and upbraidings, the terrors, confuſion and amazement of a guilty conſcience, is a happineſs worthy of the beſt care and endeavour of a man's whole life. Let

us then have always a conſcience void of offence towards God and men; and never do any thing to offer violence to our minds. For whoever ſincerely follows the rule and direction of this guide, ſhall never fatally miſcarry. But he that acts againſt the dictate and conviction of his conſcience, undermines the foundation of his comfort and peace, and ſins againſt God, and his own ſoul.

And that we may keep our conſcience clear of guilt; we ſhould frequently examine the paſt actions of our lives, and wherein we have failed of innocence, to make it up by repentance; and this we ſhould more eſpecially do, when we are preparing ourſelves to receive the holy ſacrament. And whatever we find ourſelves guilty of, we ſhould not only lament, and bewail it before God, but ſincerely reſolve, by his grace, to reform and amend wherein we have done amiſs. But if after we repent of our ſins, we return to them again, we then wound our conſcience afreſh, and involve them in a new guilt.—We ſhould alſo reverence our conſciences, ſtand in awe of them, and have a great regard to their teſtimony and verdict. For conſcience is a domeſtic, a ſort of God within us. And therefore next to the ſupreme majeſty of heaven and earth, we ſhould dread to offend our own reaſon and conſcience, which, when we do amiſs, will treat us more ſeverely, than the greateſt enemy we have. For nothing can give us ſo much comfort, or create ſo much trouble and diſquiet to us, as an evil conſcience.

And tho' the judgment of our conſciences be not always the judgment of God, yet we have great reaſon to regard it. Becauſe the judgment of our conſcience is free from any cumpulſion; no one can force it from us, nor make us condemn ourſelves without reaſon. Becauſe the ſentence of our conſcience is moſt likely to be impartial; for

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men naturally love themſelves, and are put to favour their own caſe. Becauſe the judgment our conſciences paſs on our actions, is upon the certain knowledge of their true motives and ends; we are conſcious to all the ſecret ſprings and circumſtances of our own actions, and can ſearch the moſt retired corners of our hearts. Becauſe the ſentence of our conſcience is peremptory and inexorable, and can no way be avoided. We may in vain call upon the mountains and rocks to fall on us, and hide us from the ſight of God, and our own conſcience. Wretched and miſerable man! when thou haſt offended and wounded thy conſcience. For whither canſt thou go to eſcape the eye of this witneſs, the terror of this judge, the torment of this executioner. The ſharp accuſations and ſtinging guilt of a man's conſcience will perpetually haunt him, till it be removed by repentance and forgiveneſs.

Wherefore whatever we ſay or do, let it be ſincere. For tho' hypocriſy may for a while preſerve our eſteem and reputation with others, yet it will not afford peace to our minds. For nothing can be hid from our own conſciences. If then we would keep a conſcience void of offence, let us always be calm and conſiderate, and examine things truly and impartially. Let us be humble, and willing to be informed. Let us endeavour to free ourſelves from prejudice and paſſion, from ſelf-conceit, and ſelf-intereſt, which too often biaſs the judgments even of the beſt men. If we take care to keep a good conſcience, we ſhall always be eaſy to ourſelves; but if we act contrary to the clear dictate and conviction of them, we ſhall create an enemy to ourſelves, in our own boſoms, and fall out with the beſt and moſt inſeparable companion of our whole lives.

And

And that we may keep a conſcience void of offence, we ſhould obſerve theſe following directions. Let us endeavour to get our conſciences rightly informed. For tho' ignorance may be a ſufficient excuſe where it is invincible, yet where it proceeds from our own default, in not enquiring what our duty is; this, ſo far from being an excuſe, will aggravate our crime, and encreaſe our damnation. Let us not allow ourſelves in the neglect of any duty, which the divine law commands, nor in the commiſſion of any ſin it forbids. The authority and holineſs of God's laws are equally violated by a leſſer breach of our duty, as by what is more heinous. And if we once eſteem any ſin to be little, this will bring us to believe that all are ſo. No man was ever wicked all of a ſudden; he is at firſt timorous, and contracts a habit of ſinning by degrees, till at laſt he arrives at the higheſt pitch of impiety. Let us encourage and attend to the firſt motions of our conſcience. When it performs the part of an accuſer, and ſhews us our faults, let us immediately acknowledge them before God, beg his pardon and forgiveneſs. When it acts the part of a witneſs, to convict us of any ſin, let us endeavour to waſh away the guilt, by a ſincere and hearty repentance. When it performs the part of a judge, and condemns thoſe actions which are contrary to God's law; let us abhor and forſake what we have done amiſs. For by thus retiring into our own breaſts, and regarding the admonitions of this faithful adviſer; to conſider what ſins he accuſes us of, to be heartily ſorry for, and reſolve to forſake them; we ſhall not only prevent the remorſe of our conſciences for the future, but alſo appeaſe the wrath of our angry judge, and eſcape everlaſting puniſhments. To this end, let us frequently examine ourſelves how we have behaved towards God and men. Let us conſider what ſins we have com-

committed, what duty we have neglected, what opportunity we have not improved, in doing good; and what proficiency we have made in the ways of virtue and religion; whether we grow better or worſe; whether our lives are more or leſs conformable to the word of God.

Would men every night before they go to ſleep, enter into the cloſet of their breaſts; conſult their own conſciences, and take a view of what they find recorded there, concerning their actions of the day paſt, they would find much benefit and advantage from it. Their ſleep would be more ſound and ſweet, and they would awake the next morning better diſpoſed to keep a conſcience void of offence, all the day after. And we ſhould not be ſo eaſily tempted to commit ſin, when we know we muſt account for it to God, and our own conſciences. And would we thus frequently and diligently examine our own conſciences, they would not riſe up in judgment againſt us, either in this world or the next. And let us cloſe all with fervent prayer to our good God, that he would forgive all our paſt offences, direct us in all our actions, help and aſſiſt us by his grace to obey all his commands, and to keep a conſcience void of offence towards God and men. For by prayer, we acknowledge God to be the great creator and governor of the univerſe; we beg of him thoſe ſupplies we ſtand in need of, and render our ſouls capable to receive them. By a ſerious confeſſion of our ſins to God, we became ſenſible of our wants and failings; by praiſing him for his benefits, we acknowledge our dependance upon him; by interceding for the neceſſities of others, we fill our own breaſts with pity and compaſſion, and encreaſe our charity to all men. And would we daily call ourſelves to an account, carefully examine our hearts and conſciences; and then devoutly and affectionately implore God's pardon and

forgiveneſs

forgiveneſs for the breaches of our duty, and for his grace and aſſiſtance to enable us to ſerve him better, for the future; it would be morally impoſſible, for any one to indulge himſelf, in a wicked life. And that I may prevail with every one, to keep a conſcience void of offence towards God, and towards men, I will endeavour to excite us thereto, by the following motives.

Let us then conſider the terrors and agonies of mind, which naturally flow from an evil conſcience. It is certain there is no trouble or pain in this world ſo grievous and intolerable as a guilty conſcience. The "ſpirit of a man may bear his "infirmities," thoſe diſeaſes of body and troubles of mind, which are the uſual attendants of human nature; but a wounded ſpirit is a load inſupportable, who can bear it? It is impoſſible to deſcribe the dreadful fears of a guilty mind, the horror and amazement of an evil conſcience; and which no earthly comfort can mitigate or aſſuage. When Cain had ſlain his brother, he wandered from place to place, fearful and diſtracted with his own guilt; and being left to be puniſhed by the terrors of his own conſcience, he ſaid, "my "puniſhment is greater than I can bear." Let us alſo conſider the pleaſure and happineſs of a good conſcience. The man who has it, enjoys a perfect tranquility of mind, ſecurity and quiet in his own breaſt, amidſt the various changes and chances of this life; he poſſeſſes his ſoul in patience, compoſes it to reſt, and remains maſter of himſelf; he is not afraid of any evil tidings, for his heart is fixed. He is not diſmayed at loſſes in his eſtate, or ſickneſs in his body, but reſolves with Job, that he will hold faſt his righteouſneſs, and not let it go, his heart ſhall not reproach him ſo long as he lives. As long as he builds his truſt and confidence on this rock of ages, he fears no evil. Let

never ſo great troubles and afflictions befal him; let him be deprived even of the neceſſaries of life, and his body ever ſo ſeverely puniſhed; yet he knows that his redeemer lives, that there is a God who governs the world, and when he ſees fit, will deliver him out of all his troubles. Such conſiderations afford great comfort to him, they produce a calm within his breaſt, and his conſcience is to him a continual feaſt. Such happineſs, ſo valuable a bleſſing is it, to be able to reflect on the paſt actions of our lives with comfort and ſatisfaction; to have the teſtimony of our conſcience, that we have walked uprightly and piouſly towards God, in temperance and ſobriety to ourſelves, and in perfect love and charity towards our neighbour; and to the utmoſt of our power, have kept a conſcience void of offence, both towards God and men. This will enable us to bear croſſes and afflictions with courage and chearfulneſs, and with reſolution to look death in the face. And when our laſt hour approaches, we can ſay, with good Hezekiah, "Remember now, O Lord, I beſeech thee, how "I have walked before thee in truth, and with a "perfect heart, and have done that which is good "in thy ſight." Such conſiderations as theſe will be a ſtay and comfort to us, when all the honours and riches of this world, can affotd us no ſatisfaction or relief. For at the great and terrible day, when the ungodly ſhall not ſtand in judgment, nor ſinners in the congregation of the righteous; when the wicked ſhall call to the mountains to fall on them and hide them from the wrath of an angry God: then the great ſtay and ſupport to every good man will be, the teſtimony of his conſcience, that in ſimplicity, and godly ſincerity, he has paſſed the time of his ſojourning in this world. Theſe are the fruits and bleſſed effects of keeping a conſcience void of offence; which are ſufficient

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to incite, encourage and reward our pursuits after it. Let us therefore be prevailed upon by these powerful motives, to make it our chief business in this world, to keep a conscience void of offence; and which has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come.

Diſcourſe XCVII. Bp. *Moore.*

Of RELIGIOUS MELANCHOLY.

Pſal. xlii. 5.

Why art thou caſt down, O my ſoul? Why art thou diſquieted within me?

MANY good Chriſtians of timorous and melancholy conſtitutions, feeling no preſent comfort from their ſtrict faſts, their earneſt and often repeated prayers, are apt to think, that what they perform in the ſervice of God, is ſo mean and imperfect, as neither to pleaſe him, nor profit their own ſouls. It may therefore be proper to conſider the caſe of theſe melancholy perſons, who tho' they are in a ſafe condition, yet greatly need to have their minds quieted and compoſed. Manifold are the ſcruples and fears which diſturb them. Some ſuppoſe the reformation of their lives hath not proceeded from a ſincere love to God, and deſire to pleaſe him; but from a mere dread of thoſe puniſhments which he hath threatned. Others finding a flatneſs on their minds, and want of zeal in religious duty; this makes them fear that what they do is not fit to be preſented unto God, and that he will not accept it; which ſo dejects them as even to tempt them to lay aſide their devotions. And there are others, who have ſuch wicked blaſphemous thoughts ſtart up in their minds, while exerciſed in the worſhip of God; that they think themſelves guilty of the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, pronounce their con-

condition remedileſs, and that God hath utterly rejected them.

As to the firſt, I anſwer; that no doubt love is a more noble principle of action than fear; and therefore that religious ſervice which ariſes from love, is more perfect, angelical and grateful to God: But ſtill he will not diſregard ſuch ſervice and obedience as proceeds from fear. Thoſe who have forſaken their evil ways, leſt they ſhould lead them to the pit of hell, it may be hoped, will find a place in the glorious kingdom of heaven. For hell was made to terrify daring ſinners, to reduce and confine them within the bounds of their duty; as will I hope appear from the following conſiderations.

Fear is one of the paſſions God has planted in our ſouls, as well as love; they are both implanted in us for ſome wiſe ends. When therefore the paſſion of fear ſerves the end for which God grafted it in our minds, no doubt he will approve the good effect it produces. The end for which God placed fear in our nature, was chiefly to beget in us an aweful regard of his moſt glorious majeſty; to make us dread violating his laws, and acting contrary to his righteous will; and when we go aſtray, to excite us to return to him by repentance. So that when fear prevails on a man to amend his bad life, he puts this paſſion to the very uſe which God intended. And whoever thus applies it, has no reaſon to doubt, but God will graciouſly accept his obedience. We may alſo obſerve, that God hath enforced all his laws, by threatnings as well as promiſes; the one to work on our love, the other to excite our fears; God having made the motives to our obedience, to anſwer the different paſſions of our ſouls. Wherefore there is not the leaſt reaſon to conceive, that God ſhould threaten puniſhments againſt the diſobedient, which naturally actuates the fears of men,

and yet not be pleased with the service which these fears produce in us. God sets life and death before men, that the fear of death may make them chuse life; and he threatens everlasting punishments, that the amazement and horror thereof, may powerfully engage them, with all care and speed, to labour and fit themselves to partake of the divine mercies.

Our blessed Saviour and his disciples in their sermons, address themselves not only to the passions of love, but also to that of fear; which they would not have done, but that the sacrifices of fear will ascend up to heaven with a grateful savour. "He "that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but "he that believeth not shall be damned." Christ here intends to bring men to a belief of his gospel, and the obedience of his laws, as well by the fears of damnation, as the hopes of salvation. When he bids the man whom he had cured, to "sin no "more, lest a worse thing come unto him;" the argument our Lord used to engage him to live innocently, was directed to the passion of his fear, taken from the danger of a calamity that would befal him, greater than that of which he was cured, did he still continue in his sins. And saith St. Paul, "knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade "men." The greatness of these terrors, was "that "we must all appear before the judgment-seat of "Christ, that every one may receive the things done "in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or evil;" which the apostle knew, if maturely weighed, would be of irresistible force to recover men from a lewd and profane conversation. Since they must be extremely obstinate and desperate, on whom an argument of such wonderful power and efficacy can make no impression.

I proceed to consider the case of those serious Christians, who complain of coldness in their devotion,

votion, and towards holy things. Such think they do not addreſs God in prayers with ſuch an appetite as they could wiſh, being deſtitute of earneſt and fervent deſires, for the ſucceſs of their petitions to heaven; they ſuppoſe in themſelves a great indifferency to ſpiritual exerciſes, which they apprehend is a proof of their hypocriſy, and that God will refuſe their prayers and thankſgivings, as vain inſincere oblations. And here it ought to be obſerved, that the reaſon why many have not more zeal and life in God's ſervice, proceeds from themſelves, and their own negligence and want of conſideration. They perhaps appear in the congregation, but mind not what they are about. They conſider not of what importance it is, for them to ſerve God in the moſt acceptable manner. No wonder therefore that their minds ſhould be flat and unactive, or little concerned for the proſperous iſſue of their prayers. As then it is high preſumption, for ſuch careleſs perſons to hope for any benefit, by that part they bear in the public worſhip; ſo they may cure their malady, by retiring from their buſineſs and pleaſure, and reflecting in good earneſt, on the great danger to which they expoſe their immortal ſouls. But as for thoſe who frequently endeavour to remove this coldneſs from their ſouls, when they approach the heavenly throne, and yet fail in their attempt; let me deſire them duly to weigh the following obſervations.

That the different degrees of affections, with which men ſerve God, often depends on their different tempers and conſtitutions. Some conſtitutions are ſo heavy, as that it is difficult to work on their hopes or fears; to make them ſenſible either of their gain or loſs. But others have ſuch a tenderneſs of nature, and quickneſs of ſenſe, that the leaſt thing will much affect them. A little proſperity makes their ſpirits overflow with joy; and as

ſmall a croſs ſinks and dejects them. Perſons then of ſuch various diſpoſitions, tho' they equally endeavour to prepare themſelves, cannot ſerve God with equal affections, but yet he may be pleaſed with them alike, becauſe he meaſures their obedience by the ſincerity of their minds, which is in their power; and not by the difference of conſtitutions, which were not made by themſelves. The conſtitutions of ſome men, being much warmer than others, they ſooner take fire; whether they are paying homage to God, or doing buſineſs among men. If therefore men have more heat in their natural temper, it is no wonder they ſhould have more zeal in their devotions. But God will not reject any man, becauſe he is of a cold complexion; or diſdain his reaſonable ſacrifice, for being offered with leſs vehemence of paſſion. Beſides they who render worſhip to God upon rational motives, void of paſſion, ſeem to act upon a higher and more ſublime principle; for tho' they are deſtitute of that pleaſing warmth in their paſſions, which provoke others to pray and be thankful unto God; yet they ceaſe not to celebrate his praiſes, becauſe reaſon ſuggeſts, that it is their duty to make grateful acknowledgments of his infinite mercies. Again,

It may be alſo obſerved, that the moſt zealous are not always the beſt men. Their zeal may be without knowledge, or on the wrong ſide, as was St. Paul's, when he perſecuted the church. And all zeal without charity will profit nothing. Indeed where a man is zealouſly affected in a good matter, he may be a glorious inſtrument to propagate and promote the fear and honour of God; and enjoy a more ſenſible pleaſure in every religious performance. But as all cannot raiſe their affections to this pitch. God will not quench the ſmoaking flax, nor break the bruiſed reed; but he will pardon the wanderings, pity the weakneſſes, quicken the affections, and make

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gracious allowances, for all the defects of infirm, but honeſt Chriſtians. It ſhould be farther conſidered, that the moſt religious cannot maintain an equal warmth in their devotions, at all times; even ſuch we find by experience, that in ſome ſeaſons an unaccountable heavineſs will ſeize on them, while on their bended knees, ſupplicating the forgiveneſs of their ſins. If therefore we ſometimes perceive our minds to be dull and heavy at our prayers, it is no more than what happens to the moſt ſincere Chriſtians, let them uſe ever ſo much care and diligence; ſo that this ſhould be no juſt cauſe of diſquiet and dejection of ſpirit. Beſides, ſickneſs and afflictions will ſo diſorder the paſſions and oppreſs the ſpirits, even of the beſt of men, that they cannot ſerve God with as much chearfulneſs, under calamities and troubles, as at other times.

Tho' it cannot be expected, that thoſe innocent perſons, whoſe caſe I am conſidering, ſhould meet with a compleat cure of their grief, yet let me aſſure them, that nothing will more enliven their ſpirits in the ſervice of God, than deliberate meditations on him, and themſelves, before they enter on any part of divine worſhip. Would they often engage their minds in contemplations about the divine attributes, and infinite perfections of God's nature; it would greatly tend to remove that drowſy ſtupidity, which hath ſo ſtrong an influence on their actions. For frequent thoughts of almighty power will make the moſt ſturdy temper to tremble, and the proudeſt heart to ſubmit. Can any ſeriouſly think of unſearchable wiſdom, without admiration, and an earneſt deſire to be ruled by it? And will not the meditations of infinite love, diffuſing itſelf over the world, oblige us to adore, honour, love and praiſe that moſt glorious ſpring, from whence it flows? Conſider how the providence of God extends

tends to the whole creation; how it preſerves and delivers us from many and great dangers. This will cauſe us to break forth into ſongs and hymns of thankſgiving. And if we proceed to contemplate the deep myſteries, the inconceiveable love ſhewn by Chriſt, in the mighty work of our ſalvation; to conſider his great condeſcenſion, in leaving the heavenly regions to dwell among us; his wonderful humiliation, in taking on him our frail, mortal nature; the pains, agonies, and moſt dreadful death he ſuffered, to ſave us ungrateful ſinners; this cannot fail to diſſolve the moſt obdurate heart, and make us firmly conclude, that we can never ſufficiently admire, love, ſerve, or ſuffer too much for this moſt bleſſed Saviour.

Can all your paſſions continue quiet, when you thus view your moſt merciful redeemer, who left his father's boſom to ſeek and ſave you; when loſt in the ways of ſin, in the paths leading to death! who came to procure reconciliation for you with God, whom as you had heinouſly provoked, ſo you could give no ſatisfaction to his injured juſtice. Recollect with ſeriouſneſs how often God hath ſpared you, when your hearts told you, that you deſerved puniſhment; how often you have highly offended him, and fearfully expected he would deſtroy you; yet you ſtill live as a monument of his compaſſion, and he waits for your return, to be gracious unto you. Do but meditate on theſe mercies of our God, and try if your hearts will not melt into love and affection. Surely we cannot but fall down before the Lord, with the deepeſt reverence, and eſteem him above all things, who hath created us after his own image; redeemed us with his Son's blood; daily aſſiſts us with the graces of his Holy Spirit; and hath provided for us a houſe not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Let ſuch ſubjects as theſe entertain your thoughts, before you begin any religious duty;

duty; and it will mightily conduce to fill your souls with light and life, and make you diligently study to obtain God's favour, and excite passionate desires, to live in his presence to all eternity.

Lastly, as to those unhappy persons who have wicked and sometimes blasphemous thoughts start in their minds, while they are exercised in the worship of God; which makes them think their case is desperate, and that God hath rejected them: To give such all possible ease and relief, I will endeavour to shew, that their case is not so dangerous, as they apprehend; and also offer proper advice for their behaviour, under these tumultuous disorders of mind.

And that their case is not so dangerous as they apprehend, will appear from these following considerations. Because these frightful thoughts do generally proceed from the disorder and indisposition of the body; perhaps after a fit of sickness, a great disappointment, or heavy loss. And they are most commonly good people, who are exercised with them. For bad men, who are busily employed in contriving wickedness; how to gratify their malice, execute their revenge, overreach their neighbours, or satisfy their lusts, seldom complain of these kind of thoughts. But they are honest, well meaning Christians, of unhealthy constitutions, and melancholy tempers, who are so miserably harrassed with them. Nor is it in the power of such disconsolate Christians, as are tormented with these sad thoughts, with all their endeavours to stifle and suppress them. Nay, often the more they struggle with them, the more they encrease; and when vehemently opposed, the more do they domineer and terrify men. The reason is, because by unsuccessful strivings, they feed this melancholy humour, and grow more dejected. So that there is good cause, as I before observed, to impute this to bodily distempers, rather the

ther than to faults of the mind. Indeed they who labour under ſuch complaints, are ſeldom betrayed into any great and deliberate ſins. For they being jealous of the leaſt temptations, tremble at the appearance of any notorious evil. Hence it is, that the ſins which moſt eaſily captivate others, can ſcarce enter into them. They have little temptations to covetouſneſs, who can find no ſatisfaction in riches. They cannot be hard-hearted to their neighbours in diſtreſs, who are ſo ready to beg the prayers and help of all about them. They are in no danger of being ſwelled with pride, who think worſe of their own ſtate than it deſerves. So that it plainly appears there is more trouble than danger, in the caſe of ſuch dejected Chriſtians. And tho' the ſentence they pronounce againſt themſelves is ſo black and diſmal; yet, no doubt but God in his own ſeaſon, will in ſome meaſure quiet their minds, and beſtow a large recompence on them, for all the troubles and ſorrows they have ſuſtained, out of fear that he was highly diſpleaſed with them.

The beſt advice I can give for their behaviour under theſe perplexing diſorders of mind, is, for them frequently to obſerve how their thoughts are employed. If they are engaged in good matter, encourage and ſecure them all that is poſſible, from outward diſturbance and diverſions. If taken up in trifling vain ſubjects, of no real benefit, tranſlate them to ſomething more noble and uſeful. For as our thoughts are, ſo will be our actions; we cannot think fooliſhly and act wiſely. There is a ſhort and eaſy paſſage from idle thoughts to bad ones. But if they are exerciſed in any bad or evil deſign, we muſt extinguiſh and ſuppreſs them. This we muſt do with all our might, becauſe it is of abſolute neceſſity to the health, peace and innocence of our ſouls; and by ſuch frequent reviews of our thoughts, we ſhall gain power and ſkill to manage them

them wiſely, and in good meaſure prevent, if not cure, the trouble complained of by theſe melancholy perſons. They ſhould alſo endeavour to keep their paſſions within due bounds. To bring themſelves to an equal, ſteady temper, that the affairs of this world may not ſour and ruffle their minds. To be mild and gentle in their behaviour; to avoid all needleſs heats and contentions; to be ready to do every one ſome good. Not to ſet their hopes or fears too high; not groundleſsly to deſpair, where God has pronounced no threats; nor fondly to preſume, where he has made no promiſes. Let not ſuch ſet their hearts too much on the world, nor ſuffer their paſſions to run out vehemently after it; nor yet forſake their employment by reaſon of the trouble of their minds. For no buſineſs at all, is as bad as too much; and there is always more melancholy to be found in a cloiſter than in a market-place. When a man is too full of buſineſs, he is apt to forget God; and when he is idle, his head will be a cage of unruly, unclean thoughts. Therefore let us not hide ourſelves from our friends, nor quit our calling; becauſe people of dejected tempers never fare worſe, than when they are alone, and have nothing to do. For not having company or ſecular affairs to employ them, they will be perpetually muſing on themſelves; their thoughts will all fix and center on the deſperate condition wherein their diſturbed fancy hath placed them. Whereas virtuous and chearful converſation, innocent recreations, and moderate buſineſs, will divert the diſtemper, and chaſe away theſe gloomy apprehenſions.

When you find theſe thoughts creeping on you, be not diſmayed, as if they were certain tokens of your reprobation. For ſo far as they depend on bodily indiſpoſition, which they chiefly do; I take them to be no more marks of the divine diſpleaſure, than

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ſickneſs, loſſes, or any other temporal calamity. Neither violently ſtruggle with them, ſince experience teaches, that they encreaſe by vehement oppoſition; but when neglected, they will diſſipate and waſte away.

And let not ſuch think the worſe of God, nor accuſe his providence, of not caring for them; for he ſends theſe afflictions for wiſe and kind reaſons: perhaps, as powerful preſervatives againſt heinous ſins; or, that they may leſſen our inclinations to the enjoyments of life, abate our appetites to ſenſual pleaſures, and wean our hearts from the periſhing goods of this world. Nothing will diſpoſe us more to have compaſſion on our ſuffering brethren, than our own ſorrows; or make us leſs envy the proſperity of others, or more to feel our own infirmities, and need of divine aſſiſtance, than our preſent diſconſolation and trouble. Let not theſe afflicting thoughts diſcourage our devotions, nor tempt the moſt melancholy to omit or negligently diſcharge any Chriſtian office or duty. We muſt perſevere in the ways and acts of religion, notwithſtanding ſuch performances ſeem flat and heavy. Let our prayers continually aſcend to heaven, tho' at preſent we find no anſwer or return to them. Prayer is the natural and only ſafe refuge for the afflicted; a ſure ſtay to the heart when nothing beſides can ſupport it. Prayer refines the thoughts, and exalts the ſoul above its natural pitch; ſo that he who enters on his prayers with ſome coldneſs, ſhall often, before he ends them, receive wonderful joy in his mind. Nothing makes the ſoul ſo much partake of the divine nature, as devout prayer.

At theſe diſconſolate ſeaſons, let the matter of our prayers be ſuch as implies our repoſing an extraordinary truſt and confidence in God, tho' he ſeems to hide his face from us; this will be moſt acceptable to him, and a ſtrong proof of our integrity,

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not to omit our duty, even when we find little pleaſure therein. Let our prayers be frequent rather than long; ſuch as may cauſe delight, and not prove tedious; For it is not the multitude of words, but an honeſt diſpoſition of heart, which will incline God to hear us. Let ſuch be careful not to forſake the Lord's table, tho' they there find no comfort; for that heavenly bread will refreſh their ſouls, encreaſe their graces, and repleniſh their hearts with joy, as ſoon as God finds them qualified for ſo great mercies.

What evil thoughts then ſoever are injected into our minds, ſo long as we perſiſt in a religious courſe of life, there can be no doubt but God will love and approve our ſervices. For he hath promiſed, that thoſe who are not weary in well doing, ſhall in due ſeaſon reap everlaſting life. And ſhould theſe perplexing thoughts laſt as long as we live, which is the worſt can be ſuppoſed; yet this would be no more an argument of God's diſpleaſure, than a fever or fire, the loſs of a friend, or any other affliction. Let not therefore our preſent trials and humiliations make us deſpair of finding favour with a God of boundleſs mercy and moſt tender compaſſion. We muſt perſevere in our duty, confide in his infinite goodneſs, and in time the clouds which now darken our mind, will vaniſh, and be ſucceeded by chearful light; our fears ſhall be turned into full aſſurances of unconceiveable happineſs; and all the diſorders, tumults, and confuſions in our ſouls, ſhall be changed into eternal peace, undiſturbed and endleſs joys. "Fear the Lord and praiſe him, for he hath not deſpiſed nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him, but when he cried unto him, he heard him. Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he ſhall ſtrengthen thy heart. I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy, for thou haſt conſidered my trouble;

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thou haſt known my ſoul in adverſity. I will ſing unto the Lord, becauſe he hath dealt bountifully with me; yea I will hope continually, and praiſe him more and more. O how great is thy goodneſs, which thou haſt laid up for them that fear thee! O love the Lord, all ye ſaints; for the Lord preſerveth the faithful. They that know thy name will put their truſt in thee; for thou haſt not forſaken them who ſeek thee."



Diſcourſe

Diſcourſe XCVIII. Dr. *Clarke.*

The PARABLE of the RICH MAN and LAZARUS.

Luke xvi. 25.

But Abraham ſaid, ſon, remember thou in thy life-time receivedſt thy good things, and likewiſe Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

OUR Saviour, in the beginning of this chapter, ſhews by the parable of the unjuſt ſteward, what is the true and wiſe uſe of riches. "Make "to yourſelves friends of the mammon of unrighteouſneſs; that when ye fail, they may receive "you, (or rather, that ye may be received) into "everlaſting habitations." By the mammon of unrighteouſneſs, is not here meant riches unjuſtly gotten, but riches in general; the falſe, the uncertain, the tranſitory riches of this world. So that our Lord exhorts us, to employ in the ways of juſtice, equity, ſobriety and charity, theſe tranſitory riches here, that we may hereafter obtain a poſſeſſion, unchangeable and eternal. Our Saviour, by way of reproof to the covetous Phariſees, proceeds to ſhew, by the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, that thoſe who had highly exalted themſelves in this world, were not always eſteemed by God, or in the way of being happy in the next life. "There "was, ſays he, a certain rich man, which was clothed "in purple and fine linen, and fared ſumptuouſly

" every day. He died and was buried; and in hell
" lifting up his eyes in torments, and ſeeing Abra-
" ham afar off, and Lazarus in his boſom; he beg-
" ged of him, to ſend Lazarus, that he might dip
" the tip of his finger in water and cool his tongue,
" for he was tormented in that flame." To whom Abraham replied, " Son, remember that thou in thy
" life-time receivedſt thy good things, and like-
" wiſe Lazarus evil things; but now he is com-
" forted, and thou art tormented."

It is obſervable, that tho' the rich man's petition for mercy was rejected, yet he is not expreſsly charged with any great and enormous vice; but what his peculiar crimes were, is left to be collected from the circumſtances of the whole parable. He is only here barely put in mind, that he had in his life-time received his good things, as Lazarus had evil things. It was natural to have expected, that he ſhould have been accuſed of revelling and drunkenneſs, of waſting his ſubſtance in riotous living, as the prodigal had been, in the foregoing chapter; or with cruelty and uncharitableneſs towards the poor. He might have been told, and with many aggravating circumſtances, that ſince when he lived in eaſe and plenty, enjoying an abundance of all the good things of life, he had ſhewed no regard to the poor; there was no reaſon to expect, now the ſcale was turned, and himſelf fallen into a ſtate of miſery, that the poor man ſhould leave the happineſs he had in Abraham's boſom, to come and quench the flame that tormented him. He might have been told, that ſince he had ſhewn no mercy, it was but juſt none ſhould be ſhewn to him; that he ſhould receive no relief from the ſame poor man after death, to whom he would give none when alive. All this might have been expected ſhould have been ſeverely aggravated upon him. But on the contrary, what Abraham's reply charges him

him with, does not at firſt appear to be criminal; "ſon, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedſt "thy good things." The character before given of him, is, that he was "clothed in purple and fine "linen, and fared ſumptuouſly every day." And this quality or ſtation might have been juſtified, without the imputation of any ſcandalous exceſſes. It being plainly the will of God, that there ſhould be difference of ſtations in the world; and to be ſupported with proper marks of diſtinction. For,

Luxury does not conſiſt in the innocent enjoyment of any of the good things, which God has appointed to be received with thankfulneſs; but in the waſteful abuſe of them to vicious purpoſes, inconſiſtent with ſobriety, juſtice. or charity. The exceeding plenty in which Solomon lived, is not laid to his charge as a ſin, but remarked as an inſtance of God's bleſſing upon him. "I have given thee "that which thou haſt not aſked, both riches and "honour, ſo that there ſhall not be any among the "kings like unto thee all thy days." And in the new teſtament, where the future ſtate is more clearly revealed, "godlineſs hath the promiſe both "of this life, and that which is to come." And they who are rich in this world, are not threatned to be miſerable in the next, only becauſe God hath bleſſed them here; but they are charged "not to "be high-minded, nor truſt in uncertain riches, "but in the living God, who giveth us richly all "things to enjoy: That they do good, that they "be rich in good works, ready to diſtribute, willing "to communicate; laying up in ſtore for themſelves "a good foundation, againſt the time to come, that "they may lay hold of eternal life."

Since, therefore, the rich man in this parable, is not expreſſly charged with the practice of any direct vice; and yet it being certain, that nothing but vice could occaſion his being in that place

of torment; we ought to enquire from the ſcope of our Lord's diſcourſe, and the ſeveral circumſtances of this parable, what the vices were, which Chriſt intended to condemn, in the perſon of this rich man. As alſo why our Lord choſe not to expreſs in plain words any particular vice, but left it to be collected from the whole ſeries of the parable.

In general then, it ſeems our Lord intended, that by the perſon here repreſented, ſhould be meant, not merely a ſtate of proſperity, but a real vicious character. This appears from the deſcription the rich man gives of his five brethren, who are ſuppoſed to lead the ſame manner of life, with their rich brother. And as they had no regard to the exhortation of Moſes and the prophets, the rich man judged it neceſſary, that one ſhould be ſent on purpoſe, "to teſtify unto them, leſt they "alſo ſhould come unto that place of torment." For as their courſe of life muſt needs bring them to deſtruction, if they did not repent; he therefore thought, if one went from the dead, they would repent, though they diſregarded Moſes and the prophets. But in particular, it is very probable, that our Saviour deſigned here to intimate the danger of the ſin of uncharitableneſs; when he repreſents Lazarus lying in a miſerable condition at the rich man's door, "deſiring to be fed with the "crumbs that fell from his table." And for the ſame reaſon, we may alſo ſuppoſe, that luxurious rioting and drunkenneſs was alſo intended to be reproved in this parable. For tho' all we read on this head is, that the rich man was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared ſumptuouſly every day; yet ſince neither in this parable, nor in the rich man's plea for mercy, there is no intimation of any good uſe made of his riches and grandeur; it is reaſonable to conclude, that this vice was likewiſe intended

tended by our Lord, to be part of the character here repreſented.

But our Saviour's principal view in this diſcourſe moſt evidently was to warn men of the danger of that worldly mindedneſs, neglect of religion, and intenſeneſs upon pleaſure and profit, which is not ſo much any one vice, as the foundation of all vices. It is that which makes men regardleſs of futurity, and not to have God in all their thoughts. It is that deceitfulneſs of riches, ambition, and voluptuouſneſs, and the care of things temporal, that ſtifles all notions of religion, chokes the word, and it becomes unfruitful. It is that temper, which expoſes a man to every temptation, and makes him ready to ſacrifice the intereſt of truth and virtue, whenever it comes in competition with the good things of this life, on which his heart is entirely ſet. This character is lively deſcribed by the Pſalmiſt. "There be ſome that put their "truſt in their goods, and boaſt themſelves, in "the multitude of their riches.——They think "their houſes ſhall continue for ever, and their "dwelling-places from one generation to another. "—But he ſhall carry nothing away with him "when he dies, neither ſhall his pomp follow him." Job ſpeaks of the ſame ſort of perſons. "They "ſpend their days in wealth, and in a moment go "down to the grave; therefore they ſay unto God, "depart from us, for we deſire not the know-"ledge of thy ways. What is the almighty, that "we ſhould ſerve him? and what profit ſhould we "have, if we pray unto him?" The ſame temper is alſo ſet forth by our Saviour in another rich man; who finding his ground to bring forth more fruits than he had room to beſtow them in; ſaid, "I will pull down my barns and build greater; "and there will I beſtow all my fruits and my goods. "And I will ſay to my ſoul; ſoul, thou haſt much

" goods laid up for many years; take thine eaſe, " eat, drink, and be merry." This is the true character of a perſon, whoſe treaſure is upon earth, and his heart and affections entirely placed there; who no way regards riches, honour, power, and other worldly advantages, as talents committed to his charge, to be employed in promoting and encouraging truth, virtue, juſtice and charity in the world, which is to be rich towards God; but he eſteems them as only inſtruments of luxury, pride, and vanity. But in the midſt of his folly, " God " ſaid unto him, thou fool, this night ſhall thy ſoul " be required of thee; then whoſe ſhall all theſe " things be, which thou haſt provided?"

That our Lord's view and deſign in deſcribing the ſtate of the rich man and Lazarus after their deaths, is as I have repreſented, may be eaſily confirmed, from the connexion and coherence of his whole diſcourſe in this parable. The Phariſees and chief men among the Jews, were extremely proud and vain-glorious, covetous and ambitious; " deſiring to walk in long robes, loving the higheſt ſeats in the ſynagogues, and the chief room at feaſts; making long prayers, for a ſhew before men, at the ſame time devouring widows houſes." Concerning theſe perſons, our Saviour frequently declares, that they had their reward, in the praiſe of men, which their hypocriſy procured them; but that they ſhall receive greater damnation, at the hands of God, for their real wickedneſs. Our Lord's diſcourſes through the whole goſpel, have a perpetual view to theſe men's corruptions, particularly in this chapter, of which my text is a part. " Ye are they, ſays he, which juſtify yourſelves before men, but God knoweth your hearts; for that which is highly eſteemed amongſt men, is abomination in the ſight of God." And then to illuſtrate and confirm this aſſertion, he concludes this

this his diſcourſe with the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, wherein is repreſented in the ſtrongeſt and moſt affectionate manner, how riches, power and grandeur, ſo highly valued in this world, are no marks at all of God's favour; for that in the next life, God will judge men entirely by their virtues. So that many who are firſt here, ſhall be laſt there, and the laſt ſhall be firſt. Having thus fully explained the deſign of this parable; I will now conſider what reaſon there might be, why our Lord choſe not to expreſs in plain words any particular vice, for which the rich man was condemned; but to leave it rather to be collected from the ſeries of the parable.

And ſince it is plain from the introduction, that our Lord here intended to reprove the covetous and proud Phariſees, we may reaſonably ſuppoſe, that he expreſſed himſelf after this manner, that they might more readily apply the parable to themſelves. Had our Lord aggravated the particular vices of the rich man, they probably would have thanked God, "that they were not as other "men are, or even as this rich man." But by our Saviour's deſcription, their own hearts muſt tell them, they were ſuch as he deſcribed; and that all their grandeur, and being highly eſteemed by men, was of no advantage before God, the judge of hearts. This muſt naturally lead ſuch of them as had any ſenſe of religion, to conſider and recollect from the diſcourſe, for what vices the rich man was condemned.

But the principal reaſon why our Lord thus expreſſed himſelf, ſeems to be, that he might apprize his diſciples of the great danger, to which an uninterrupted ſtate of worldly proſperity, does expoſe men. He repreſents the rich man, as condemned to a place of torment, intimating, that on

one could be ignorant, of the temptations incident to ſuch a ſtate; not that riches, honour, power, and other temporal advantages, are in themſelves criminal; on the contrary, they are real bleſſings of providence; talents, by the right uſe of which men obtain a great reward; "laying up in ſtore for themſelves a good foundation againſt the time to come, that they may attain eternal life." But who that obſerves what has generally happened in all ages and nations, can aſſure himſelf, was he inveſted with arbitrary power and dominion; that he could execute that truſt, without ſuch a tyrannical ſpirit, as the government of this world are generally fond of? Who can rely upon himſelf, was he advanced to the higheſt pitch of honour and grandeur, that he would avoid all pride, inſolence and ambition? Who can be ſure, if he was ſurrounded with immenſe riches, with eaſe, plenty, and flattery; that he could reſiſt all temptations to luxury and voluptuouſneſs, by which innumerable perſons have been ruined before him? For this reaſon our Lord in moſt of his diſcourſes, uſes the ſtrongeſt expreſſions on this head. "Woe unto you that are rich, for ye have received your conſolation. It is eaſier for a camel to go thro' the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven." Not that the enjoyment of the bleſſings of providence in this life is criminal, as I have before obſerved; but that the temptations to abuſe thoſe bleſſings are many and great, and require much reſolution to overcome them. No doubt, Chriſt's intention by ſo frequently repeating his admonitions of this ſort, was, to comfort the poor, by ſhewing that virtuous poverty is no mark of the divine diſpleaſure; and when occaſioned by perſecution for righteouſneſs ſake, that it entitles men to an extraordinary reward. On the other ſide, that he might give perpetual caution

caution to the rich, ſo to uſe the good things of this life, as that the ultimate deſign of all their actions, may have a conſtant view to that which is to come, thereby to prevent their falling into the ſame condemnation, with the rich man in the goſpel. I proceed to draw ſome obſervations, naturally ariſing from the main ſcope, and intent of this parable.

And hence it appears, that uncharitableneſs and unmercifulneſs to the poor is a very great ſin, containing inhumanity and impiety. We find no other fault imputed to the rich man, but that he took no care out of his ſuperfluities and abundance, to relieve this poor man, that lay at his gate. He is not charged with having got a great eſtate by fraud and oppreſſion, but that in the midſt of his abundance, he had no pity for thoſe who were in want. It is a certain ſign of a cruel and ſavage diſpoſition, not to pity and relieve thoſe that are in miſery. Tenderneſs and compaſſion for the ſufferings of others, is a virtue ſo ſuitable to our nature, that it is therefore called humanity; being as it were eſſential to it. For whenever we ſee a man groaning under want, and do not relent, and relieve him, if we are able, we are hard-hearted to our own nature, and do in ſome ſenſe hate our own fleſh. Beſides the inhumanity of this ſin, it is alſo a great impiety to God. For unmercifulneſs to the poor implies in it contempt of God, a ſlighting of his providence, and ſhews we do not love him. "He that oppreſſeth "the poor, reproacheth his maker;" that is, he deſpiſeth God, who made him after his own image; for the poor man bears the image of God, as well as the rich; and we cannot oppreſs, or neglect him, without reflecting on God, whoſe image he is. The uncharitable man ſlights God's providence, in not conſidering, that riches and poverty are of the

the Lord; that he can ſoon alter our condition, and that it is eaſy for him to make a rich man poor. God can ſoon turn the wheel, and lay the rich man as low as the poor man. He can "caſt down the "mighty from his ſeat, and exalt the humble and "meek." But we do not ſufficiently reverence God's providence, if when he hath bleſſed us with plenty and abundance, we ſhew no pity and regard to thoſe who are in need; and unmercifulneſs to the poor plainly demonſtrates, that we do not love God; "whoſo hath this world's goods, and ſeeth his brother have need, and ſhutteth up his bowels of compaſſion from him; how dwelleth the love of God in him?" This deſerves to be ſeriouſly conſidered by thoſe who make a great appearance of devotion in prayer, faſting, reading and hearing God's word, and in other frugal exerciſes of religion, which coſt them nothing; leſt with the young man in the goſpel, after they have kept all the other commandments, they be rejected by Chriſt, for want of this one thing.

There is no particular grace and virtue, to which the promiſe of eternal life is ſo frequently made, as to this of mercy and charity to the poor. "Bleſſed are the merciful, for they ſhall find mercy. —Charge them that are rich in this world, that they do good, be rich in good works, ready to diſtribute, willing to communicate, laying up in ſtore for themſelves a good foundation or treaſure, againſt the time which is to come, that they may lay hold of eternal life." Our future happineſs does not ſo much depend upon the exerciſe of any one ſingle grace or virtue, as on this of charity and mercy; for the ſcripture lays the greateſt weight upon this of charity. So that if we truly believe the precepts of the goſpel, its promiſes and threatnings, we cannot but have a principal regard to it.

Another

Another obſervation I would make from this parable, is, that a man may be poor and miſerable in this world, and yet dear to God. Lazarus, tho' deſpiſed in his life-time by this rich man, yet when he came to die, God gave his angels charge over him, and he was carried to Abraham's boſom. Nay, our bleſſed Saviour was "deſpiſed and rejected of men, a man of ſorrows, and acquainted with grief." God could have ſent him into the world with majeſty and great glory, but the wiſdom of God choſe rather that he ſhould appear in a poor and humble, a ſuffering and afflicted condition; to confound the pride of the world, who think God hates all whom he permits to be afflicted. But afflictions, ſo far from being a ſign of God's hatred, are an argument of his love and care. "Whom the Lord loveth, he chaſteneth, and ſcourgeth every ſon, whom he receiveth. God hath choſen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which he hath promiſed to them that love him." This conſideration ſhould perſuade us to patience under the greateſt ſufferings and afflictions. God may be our father, and yet chaſten us ſeverely; he may love us, though the world hates us. It is but exerciſing a little patience, and theſe ſtorms will blow over, and we ſhall be removed into calmer regions; "where all tears ſhall be wiped from our eyes, and death and ſorrow ſhall be no more." Again,

Hence we may obſerve the different ſtates of good and bad men, after this life. "Lazarus died and was carried by the angels into Abraham's boſom; the rich man died, and went to hell." This the divine juſtice ſeems to require, and without a revelation, is very credible to natural reaſon, whether we conſider God, or ourſelves. If we conſider God to be the holy and righteous governor of the world, that he loves goodneſs and hates ſin,

ſin, our reaſon tells us, that he is concerned to countenance the one, and diſcountenance the other, in ſuch a ſolemn public manner, as may vindicate his holineſs and juſtice to the world. And as the diſpenſations of his providence are now promiſcuous, it ſeems reaſonable there ſhould be a general aſſize, a fair and open trial; "when God will render to every man according to his works." Alſo if we conſider ourſelves, this will appear very credible; for if we ſearch our own conſciences, this is acknowledged, by that inward peace and ſatisfaction we perceive in any good action; and in that ſhame, fear and horror, that attend the commiſſion of even the moſt ſecret ſin.—Both ſcripture and reaſon aſſure us of a future judgment, and that when we go out of this world, we ſhall meet with the proper reward of our actions in the next. And though the happineſs or miſery of men, ſhall not be compleat, till after the publick judgment, yet it is unſpeakably great. Lazarus immediately after death, was carried into Abraham's bo'om; and the rich man is repreſented as in great anguiſh and torment. But what the happineſs of good men, or the miſery of bad men, ſhall be hereafter, no one can expreſs. But there will be a great difference between men's conditions in this world and the next. The rich man proſpered here, and was afterwards tormented; Lazarus was poor and miſerable in this world, and happy in the other; and its very agreeable to the wiſdom of God, to make ſuch differences; as well for the trying of mens virtues, as for the rewarding of them.

God ordains the ſufferings of good men, to try their faith and love to him, to improve their virtue, and to prevent thoſe ſins, which a ſtate off proſperity may draw men into: to take off their affections from the love of this world, and to fix them on things above; to prove their ſincerity to God,

and

and to exerciſe their patience and ſubmiſſion to his will; and to prepare them for the glory of the next life. And God alſo does this, in order to reward their virtue; that as they, who will enjoy the pleaſures of this world, gratify their ſenſes, and neglect their immortal ſouls, may inherit the juſt conſequences of their wretched choice: So on the other hand, that they who love God above all things, who believe the reality and eternity of the other ſtate, and live accordingly, may not be diſappointed in their hopes; namely, to ſerve God, and ſuffer for him, for nothing. And from the condition of men, in this world and the next, we may infer, that no man ſhould meaſure his felicity or unhappineſs, from what happens to him here. If we are rich and honourable, are ſplendidly attired, and fare ſumptuouſly every day; let not this make us think ourſelves the happy men: or, if we are poor and miſerable, deſtitute of all the conveniences and accommodations of life; let us not repine at our lot, and murmur at God, for having dealt hardly with us; ſince no man can be pronounced happy or miſerable, for what befals him in this life. This is but a ſhort inconſiderable duration, and it matters not much what entertainment we meet with in paſſing through this world. The ſtate of eternity is what ſhall determine the happineſs, or miſery of men. He is the happy man, and he the miſerable, who ſhall be the one or other, in that ſtate which is eternal. We ſhould not therefore ſet too great a value upon the bleſſings of this life; leſt we receive our good things here, and be tormented hereafter; nay, we ſhould be ſo far from applauding ourſelves in the proſperity of this world, that we ſhould be afraid, leſt this ſhould be our portion, and that our miſery in the next world, will be the greater for our having been happy here.

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The felicities of this world are tranſient, and ever paſſing away; and if miſery ſucceed theſe, they had better never have been. Temporal good things are only for this ſhort life; did men ſeriouſly conſider this, they would not ſo eſtimate the periſhing enjoyments of this life, as for the ſake of them, to neglect the momentous concerns of another world. We are apt to be dazzled with the preſent glitterings of worldly glory and proſperity. But would we look on theſe things, as they will ſhortly appear; how little would they ſignify? The rich man thought himſelf more happy, than poor Lazarus; and yet after a little while, how glad would he have been, to have exchanged conditions with this poor man? We ſhould value this world, as the rich man, not when he enjoyed it, but after he was taken from it. We ſhould do all things here, with regard to our future and eternal ſtate. It ſignifies not much, what our condition is in this world, becauſe it is but of ſhort continuance. But we ought to have a great and ſerious regard to that ſtate, which ſhall never end. We ſhould therefore conſider what influence every action we do will have upon the happineſs, or miſery of the next life. To be rich in this world, will contribute nothing to our future felicity; the things we ſo much dote on here, will ſignify nothing, when we come to appear before God. Death will ſtrip us of theſe things; and in the other world, the ſoul of the pooreſt man, will be upon equal terms with the richeſt. Nothing but holineſs and virtue will then avail us; ſo that the beſt thing we can do in this world, is to provide for the other.

The laſt obſervation I would make on this parable is, that the ſtate of men, in the next life, is fixed and unchangeable. "Between us and you, there is a great gulf fixed, ſo that they that would

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paſs from hence to you cannot; neither can they paſs to us, that would come from thence." Thoſe that are happy will continue ſo; and thoſe that are miſerable muſt remain in that ſad ſtate. This conſideration of the immutable ſtate of men after this life, ſhould engage us, with all ſeriouſneſs and diligence to endeavour to ſecure our future happineſs. God hath ſet before us good and evil, life and death, and we may chuſe which we pleaſe; but in the other world we muſt abide by that choice, be it what it will. Man by ſin is brought into a miſerable ſtate; and yet not deſperate, or paſt remedy. For God hath "ſent his ſon to be a prince and a ſaviour to give repentance and remiſſion of ſins." So that it is our own fault, if we do not lay the foundation of a perpetual happineſs for ourſelves; the grace of God is ready to aſſiſt us, and no man's caſe is ſo bad, but he may, if he will, make uſe of the grace which God offers; and by the influence and aſſiſtance of this grace, thoſe "who are dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, may be turned from darkneſs to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." But if we neglect the opportunities of this life, and reject the grace and mercy of God, we are loſt for ever. God will try us no more after this life; our miſcarriage in this world, will prove fatal to us in the other; we ſhall have no further time to correct our errors: as the tree falls, ſo it ſhall lie. The ſtate we are in when we go hence will be fixed, and never can be changed. We are yet in the hands of God, and by his grace may be forever happy; but if we trifle away this advantage, we ſhall fall into the hands of the living God, out of which there is no redemption. God hath yet left heaven and hell to our choice, and we ought to take care to chuſe well, as we can do this but once, for all and

for

for ever. There is yet ſpace and opportunity left for repentance, but as ſoon as we enter upon the other world, our condition will be ſealed, never to be reverſed; ſo that, "this is the accepted time, this is the day of ſalvation! Therefore to-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts; leſt God ſwear in his wrath, that we ſhall not enter into his reſt."

Diſcourſe XCIX. Abp. *Sharpe.*

The PARABLE of the PRODIGAL SON.

Luke xv. 18, 19.

I will ariſe and go to my father, and ſay unto him, father, I have ſinned againſt heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy ſon.

IN our Saviour's famous parable of the prodigal ſon many excellent things are delivered for the inſtruction, direction, and encouragement of all penitent ſinners. We here read of the miſerable condition, which the prodigal ſon brought himſelf into by his evil courſes; and which was very great. "How many hired ſervants, ſaid he, of my fa-"ther have bread enough and to ſpare, and I pe-"riſh with hunger!" and alſo his reſolution to return to his father, which followed thereupon. When he came to himſelf, that is, conſidered, he ſaid, I will ariſe, and go to my father, &c. Under the firſt circumſtance of the prodigal, I ſhall repreſent the true ſtate of ſinners and wicked men, and the wretched condition into which ſuch bring themſelves. I ſhall then treat of the method by which ſinners are brought to repentance; the firſt ſtep of which is, a deep and ſerious conſideration of their own ſtate and condition.

I begin with the prodigal's evil courſes and miſery; and it will be proper to conſider the account given of him in this parable, both as to his ſin and miſery. "A certain man, ſays our Lord,

had two ſons, and the younger of them ſaid to his father, father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after, the younger ſon gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there waſted his ſubſtance with riotous living. And when he had ſpent all, there aroſe a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went to a citizen of that country, who ſent him into his fields to feed ſwine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the huſks that the ſwine did eat, and no man gave unto him." By the father here, is meant God, the great father and lord of the world, who, out of his abundance, beſtows on mankind their ſeveral portions. Not one of his children but has a variety of talents committed to him; which, if carefully managed and improved, he will forever preſerve the love, favour and kindneſs of his heavenly father; and will not fail of living happily here, and arriving at laſt to a glorious ſtate of immortality. By the two ſons is meant, the two different ſorts of men in the world. In the character of the eldeſt ſon, are repreſented thoſe men, who being bleſſed with a good temper, virtuous inclinations, and careful education, have in a great meaſure preſerved their innocency all their lives; have not wandered from their father's houſe, nor gone aſtray in the paths of vice and wickedneſs; but have ſerved their heavenly father, without any wilful or habitual tranſgreſſion of his commandments. In the character of the younger ſon, who is the prodigal, are repreſented all thoſe men who abuſe the talents committed to them, the benefits, helps, and powers beſtowed upon them, to evil purpoſes; who forſake the guidance and conduct of their heavenly father, and betake themſelves to a courſe of vice and ſenſuality; in a word, all who live wickedly, whether Jews or Gentiles.

Theſe

Theſe are the prodigals here mentioned, for whoſe comfort and encouragement to repent, this parable was framed by our Saviour. And in the account of the prodigal's evil courſes and their conſequences, we have a lively deſcription of the ſtate of ſinners, the methods and ſteps by which they proceed in ſin, and the wretched condition they are thereby brought into; as will appear by comparing one with the other in the following particulars.

The younger ſon having got his portion, cares no longer to be in his father's houſe, thinking his liberty there too much abridged: And in order to be free from the awe and reſtraint of his father, he goes into a foreign country. And thus it is with ſinners: the firſt ſtep of their miſcarriage, is the forſaking their heavenly father. They think it too ſevere a diſcipline to live always under the apprehenſions and awe of an inviſible being. And therefore put the thoughts of God out of their minds, ſaying with the profane people in Job, "depart from us, "for we deſire not the knowledge of thy ways." That is, they depart from God while they do not conſider or regard him; while they ceaſe to maintain a conſtant ſenſe of his juſtice, goodneſs, and providence in their minds; while they lay aſide the care of his worſhip, neglect their prayers and holy exerciſes, and live as if they did not believe there is an intelligent, omnipotent being, who governs the world, and to whom they are accountable.

The prodigal having got into a diſtant country, and out of his father's ſight, allows himſelf all the liberties his heart can deſire; lives viciouſly and profuſely, and ſoon ſpends what his father had given him. Thus alſo the ſinner, when once he throws off the fear of God, and all ſenſe of religion, (which is the beſt ſecurity of men's innocence, and the moſt effectual curb to keep them from go-

ing aſtray) he preſently runs into all ſorts of extravagancy and debauchery; gives the reins to every appetite and paſſion, and takes his fill of unlawful liberties and gratifications, and by this means miſapplies thoſe talents, which God hath committed to him. He beſots his underſtanding, depraves and corrupts his will, weakens all his ſpiritual powers, hardens his conſcience, and thereby loſes all ſenſe of good and evil; he ſquanders away his time, renders himſelf incapable of the benefit and advantages which God gave him to improve in virtue.

The prodigal having thus ſpent his portion by his profuſe way of living, is at laſt, by reaſon of the extremity of want, forced to become a ſervant. And this is the true condition of a ſinner. He who lives in the conſtant gratification of his luſts and appetites, ſo weakens his higher powers, that in a little time he is reduced to the abject condition of a ſervant or bondman. They who give themſelves to commit ſin, are the ſervants of ſin. He that is entangled in a habit of vice and wickedneſs, is no longer at his own diſpoſal, but his luſts hurry him whitherſoever they will. Reaſon is dethroned, and the brutiſh part of man reigns and governs. He is not a ſervant to one lord only, but to many, and all inconſiſtent with one another, which makes the ſervitude ſtill more intolerable. Luſt commands one thing, ambition another; covetouſneſs this way, intemperance another; ſome the man muſt obey: And yet which ſoever he does, the reſt are diſpleaſed for not being gratified. Indeed they all conſpire to promote the intereſt of the great enemy of mankind, the devil; whoſe work a man does when he purſues the gratifications of his appetites. So that he is a ſlave of the devil, as well as of his own luſts, which certainly is the moſt miſerable bondage in the world. He who "committeth ſin is of the devil;"

and

and ſuch perſons are "led captive by him at his "will and pleaſure." Again,

The prodigal having thus of a freeman made himſelf a ſervant, we will next ſee how wretchedly and baſely he is uſed: and he is put to the meaneſt and moſt contemptible employment, even to feed ſwine, and his diet no better than the huſks that were given to the hogs. Juſt thus are all they treated who give themſelves up to a vicious life. God deſigned men for noble employments, and ſo long as they preſerved their innocence, and remained under their father's wing, in his fear and obedience; they lived like the children of the moſt high. Their work was ſuitable to their dignity, and becoming ſuch excellent natures as God had given them. Their buſineſs was to contemplate God and his works; to exerciſe their reaſon about the beſt and nobleſt ſubjects; to ſing praiſes to him who was the author of their being; and to employ all their faculties in the moſt manly way. To love and do good to all their fellow creatures, as they had opportunity; to govern their inferior appetites, and keep them conſtantly in ſubjection to the higher ſpirit that was in them. This was the employment that our heavenly father deſigned us for; and this, all virtuous perſons, all who live up to the dignity of their nature, do ſtill follow. But alas! what a mighty change is there when a man departs from God, and gives himſelf up to the ſervice of his luſts! Without a figure, we may truly ſay, that the keeping of ſwine with the prodigal, is a more honourable employment than that which ſinners chuſe for themſelves. What can be more baſe or vile than that immortal ſouls, made for the fruition of God himſelf, ſhould ſpend days and years, in minding nothing but eating, ſleeping and playing; or in ſcraping together heaps of money, which in a little time will prove uſeleſs to them; or in wallowing in uncleanneſs and luſt,

which generally ends in beggary, ſhame, or rottenneſs: or in filling their bodies full of drink, till there be nothing but the ſhape of a man remaining? And yet theſe are the principal employments in which vicious men buſy themſelves. Theſe are the things they live for, and beyond which they have no thought or ambition. "Whatever is in the world, "is either the luſt of the fleſh, the luſt of the eye, or "the pride of life." Senſual pleaſures, wealth, popular applauſe and greatneſs, are the three great idols of the world; and whoever forſakes his God, falls down and worſhips one or more of them. But are not theſe pitiful and contemptible deities, for a rational and immortal ſoul to proſtrate itſelf before? Is it not a ſhameful proſtitution of our natures, to make theſe the great objects of our fears and hopes, of our love and joy, of all the deſigns and purſuits of our lives? Oh! the blindneſs and degeneracy of mankind! what mean, deſpicable creatures do we make ourſelves, when we forſake the paths of virtue and the commandments of our God? Alas! we ceaſe to be men, and level ourſelves with the brutes; we debaſe ouſelves even to hell.

Such is the nature of things, that it is impoſſible for a vicious man to live happily, let his circumſtances be ever ſo proſperous. The mind of man can never be fully contented with any outward good, and leaſt of all, with thoſe which are enjoyed in a vicious unreaſonable manner. Solomon, who made more experiments of this kind, than any man beſides, found at laſt, that theſe ſeeming ſatisfactions were but vanity and vexation of ſpirit. All the pleaſure which the ſinner can receive from the greateſt gratification of his ſenſual appetites, are like to thoſe that brute beaſts are capable of as well as he; only with this difference, that their enjoyments are not allayed with bitterneſs, which his are. And can that be the happineſs of a man, which animal creatures

creatures partake of as much as himſelf? But ſo far are our vicious gratifications from being true pleaſures, that, take them altogether, they have much more of uneaſineſs and trouble, than of delight and ſatisfaction. The covetous, the proud, the revengeful, the envious, the glutton, the drunkard, the whoremonger, the ambitious, all theſe can teſtify from ſad experience, that the contentment they receive from the gratification of theſe ſeveral paſſions or appetites, doth no ways countervail the pains and reſtleſſneſs, the diſturbances, diſappointments, and manifold evil conſequences to their bodies and ſouls, good names and eſtates, which they ſuffer upon account of them.

But to come to the laſt circumſtance of the prodigal's condition, which the parable mentions: As coarſe and diſagreeable fare as the huſks were, yet he would have been glad to have ſatisfied his hunger even with theſe; but thus much was denied him. "He would fain fill his belly with the huſks which "the ſwine did eat, but no man gave them unto "him." Wretched unhappy man! he, who before pampered himſelf with all ſorts of delicacies, even to ſurfeiting, would now be glad of any ſort of food, even of huſks, if he could get them. But ſo cruel is the maſter he ſerves, that he will not ſuffer him to fill his belly, no not with theſe. In this inſtance alſo, we have a lively repreſentation of the ſtate and condition of the ſpiritual prodigal.—For thus doth the devil treat all thoſe who abandon God and virtue, to ſerve him and their own luſts. The beſt wages they have is only a little ſenſual pleaſure, or empty honour and greatneſs, which are but huſks in compariſon of the noble entertainments of religion, and a good conſcience. But even theſe they cannot have their fill of; for, alas! they are obnoxious to a thouſand contingencies, which either rob us of them, or put a period to all the delight

and comfort we ſhould receive by them; they are in a ſhort time either taken from us, or we from them.

How then can he be ſaid to have his fill of wealth, who is either always craving and drudging for more, or anxiouſly fearful to loſe what he hath? and who, notwithſtanding the fulneſs of his barns, and the largeneſs of his poſſeſſions; and his "ſaying to him-"ſelf, ſoul, eat and drink and be merry, for thou "haſt goods laid up for many years," ſhall hear theſe words, "thou fool, this night ſhall thy goods "be taken from thee, and then whoſe will all theſe "things be?" Nor are there any greater hopes for the ambitious, who as eaſily may command the wind, the ebbings and flowings of the ſea, as ſecure to themſelves the uncertain favour of great men, or the more uncertain breath of the people. And as for bodily pleaſures, what do they ſignify, when the appetites are decayed and periſhed; when the powers of nature grow feeble and languid? This old age will undoubtedly bring to paſs, but moſt frequently riots and debauches effect it ſooner. Beſides, what comfort and ſatisfaction can they afford a ſinner under a multitude of other unfortunate, afflicting circumſtances, to which he is unavoidably expoſed? Can he ſay, I will refreſh myſelf with play, or wine, or muſic, when he lies languiſhing on a ſick bed? Or will his heaps of treaſure charm the gout, ſtone, or cholic, that they ſhall not torment him? or laſtly, can all theſe things together yield any balm to heal a wounded conſcience, which in the midſt of the greateſt affluence, the moſt luxurious entertainments, makes the vicious man to tremble and look pale with the bitter reflections of his life paſt, and the diſmal proſpect of what is to come? Alas! in ſuch caſes, he can purchaſe no quiet and repoſe to his mind, from the poſſeſſion of what the world calls great and happy.

But

But supposing he could uninterruptedly fill and satisfy his appetites herein, without the disturbance of sickness, afflictions, disappointments, and even of a guilty conscience; yet this misery will still attend him, that he cannot enjoy these things always. The time is coming on apace when he must part with these his friends and comforters; in a little time he must go into the regions of death; and then bid an everlasting farewel to the light of his eyes, the desire of his soul, and the idols of his life. Then he will sadly say with the prodigal, "how many hired "servants are there in my father's house that have "bread enough, but lo! I perish with hunger." He calls for his pleasures, but they are all gone as a dream when one awaketh. He calls for his wealth, which with so much anxiety and toil he hath amassed together; but that is upon the wing, to fly to a new heir, who perhaps will spend it more profusely than he got it sordidly; and all his gay feathers in which he prided himself, are now plucked from him, and he is left naked and despicable. In this extremity, he sees nothing but what fills him with horror. If he looks inward, there is all hell, despair, and confusion; there he finds a soul polluted with sin, oppressed with intolerable loads of guilt, and filled with the remembrance of his past folly. If he looks about him, he sees all his friends and companions taking their last leave of him; and as they forsake him, his great master, the devil, with his frightful guard (whose interest he hath faithfully pursued all his life) are ready to seize upon the trembling soul, as it parts from the body. Lastly, if he looks upwards, he sees an angry offended God, whose laws he hath affronted, whose threatnings he hath despised, whose grace he hath turned into wantonness, and whose holy spirit he hath done despite to. He sees the judge of the world summoning him to appear at his dreadful tribunal,

to give an accouut of the talents he hath miſemployed, of the precious time he hath miſpent; of the riots and debauches, the frauds and unjuſt dealings, the oaths and blaſphemies, the lewd intrigues, wicked deſigns, profane words and evil actions of his whole life: and he ſeems to hear that terrible ſentence ſounding in his ears, which will be moſt certainly pronounced upon him, and all ſuch, at the laſt day, "Go, ye curſed, into everlaſting fire, "prepared for the devil and his angels." Oh! miſerable ſtate! the diſmal concluſion of a ſinful life! Theſe are the natural fruits and conſequences of forſaking God, and giving ourſelves over to a courſe of vice and impiety. Nor is there any probability of preventing or averting thoſe conſequences, unleſs with the prodigal, we do in time come to ourſelves, and enter into a ſerious conſideration of our ways, and then ariſe and go to our father.

Which leads me to conſider the prodigal's return. "I will ariſe and go to my father." And here we have a lively repreſentation of the beginning and progreſs of repentance after a vicious life. The prodigal being pinched with extremity of want, at laſt comes to weigh and debate things ſeriouſly in his own mind. Whilſt he was in the height of his proſperity, he minded nothing but the purſuit of his riots and debauches; he ſeemed to live without thinking or any kind of reflection. But at laſt his miſerable circumſtances make him to deliberate, and uſe his reaſon. He then conſiders the happineſs he has loſt, and the wretched condition, to which his folly hath brought him. And this puts him upon ſerious reſolutions, to apply to his father. And thus it fares with every ſpiritual prodigal, who, after a vicious courſe of life, at laſt returns to his duty. The firſt ſtep of his repentance, is a ſerious ſenſe of his condition; till he begins to think, reflect,

flect, and conſider, there are no hopes of him; but when providence by a fit of ſickneſs, or ſome ſharp affliction, brings him to a ſenſe of his condition, and that he in good earneſt lays things to heart, and debates matters ſeriouſly with himſelf; then he gives ſome hopes that he may, in time, reſcue himſelf from the bondage of his luſts, and the ſnares of the devil, and become a convert to virtue and piety.

Let then all of us who have gone aſtray, with the prodigal inſtantly lay the foundation of repentance, which is ſerious conſideration. And I would to God we would all do it preſently. Oh! that we would give ourſelves leave to think; and no longer blindly purſue our appetites; that we would at laſt come to ourſelves, as this prodigal did, and reſume the exerciſe of our long abandoned reaſon; that we would with David, "ſtand in awe, and com-"mune with our own hearts in our chamber, and "be ſtill:" That we would ſedately conſider what will be the iſſue and concluſion of our riots and vicious courſes! Where we thus wiſe, did we thus conſider, I doubt not but thro' the grace of God, we ſhould in a very little time, feel a mighty change in our minds; and then imitate the prodigal in the ſecond ſtep he made to his repentance, namely, enter into firm purpoſes and reſolutions to quit our lewd courſes, and to return to our heavenly father, from whom we have ſo long withdrawn ourſelves.

To perſuade all who are concerned, thus to come to themſelves, and to enter into ſerious conſiderations, about their everlaſting intereſts, is the next thing I ſhall offer. Let ſuch then conſider, that it is this want of thinking, reflecting, and coming to themſelves, that hath been the great occaſion of all their paſt ſins and follies. But if ſuch will ſeriouſly conſider their own ſpiritual affairs, they cannot avoid being brought to true repentance. Serious thinking, if practiſed and continued, will have the ſame

effect

effects upon others that it had upon the prodigal. It will make them return to their father.

It is the want of thinking and reflecting, that is the great occaſion of all the miſcarriages of our lives. For though our natures are bad enough, and our propenſity to ſin is very great, yet it is not ſo much that which hurries us into ſo many ſorts of follies and vices as our inconſideration. We will not give ourſelves liberty to think and reflect upon the conſequences of our actions, before we venture upon them, but blindly ruſh into them; and hence comes the great degeneracy of human kind; we follow our preſent inclinations, and attend no further than juſt what the object before us, or the circumſtances we are engaged in, prompt us to. And after we have done a ſinful action once or twice, by degrees it becomes familiar to us, and at laſt our ſins grow habitual and cuſtomary, and then it is not eaſy to conquer them. The truth is, want of conſideration is the fountain of almoſt all the miſcarriages of mankind. What is it that makes any man an atheiſt, or to queſtion the being of God and providence, but that he will not give himſelf leave to think; will not take the pains to view the manifeſt effects and footſteps which every where, and in every thing, are to be diſcovered of an infinite power, wiſdom and goodneſs? The ſame may be ſaid of thoſe who are infidels and ſceptics as to the Chriſtian religion. None is ſo becauſe he wants evidence of the truth of the goſpel, (for there is enough to convince the moſt curious enquirer) but becauſe he will not conſider. He runs on in a road of worldly buſineſs or ſenſuality, and cannot find time or humour, to make a ſerious and ſtrict enquiry into things of this nature. If a man would but uſe his reaſon fairly, and calmly attend to the arguments that may be offered for the convincing him of the being of God, or the truth of Chriſt's religion; he

he could almoſt as ſoon not be man, as an atheiſt, or an unbeliever. And thus, as to the particular immoralities of our lives, it would not be poſſible for any man to live in the practice of common oaths and imprecations, if when tempted to ſwear, or damn, he did ſeriouſly conſider that it is the dreadful name of God, he is going to affront, who can damn him in good earneſt for the lewd abuſe of his tongue.

Again, it is nothing but inconſideration that makes any man follow a courſe of drunkenneſs and ſenſuality; he could hardly be ſuch a brute, if his mind was attentive to the diſmal conſequences both as to his buſineſs, health, eſtate, and poſterity, as well as his ſoul, in following ſuch a courſe of life. It is ſtupidity and want of thought that ruins us all. We may pretend the unhappineſs of our education, the badneſs of our nature, the force of temptations, the irreſiſtible baits of pleaſure or profit, or the bewitching charms of company, in excuſe for our careleſs or vicious lives: But in reality it is our own raſhneſs and inconſideration, that ought generally to bear the greateſt blame. If we would but ſeriouſly and frequently conſider the arguments and motives to religion, and meditate upon them, it would be impoſſible for us to live as we do. Did we ponder deeply and often, upon the ſhortneſs and uncertainty of our lives, the madneſs and folly, the ſhame and uneaſineſs of all ſorts of ſin; the joy, peace, and continual feaſt of innocency and a good conſcience; the ſerious deſire of God that we ſhould all be happy; the ſevere account we muſt one day give of all our actions; the unſpeakable, glorious and immortal life, that we may attain by holineſs and virtue, and the everlaſting puniſhment in hell that does certainly await all lewd, profane, ungodly, impenitent ſinners: I ſay, let a man ſeriouſly and conſtantly conſider theſe things, and it would

would not be poſſible for him to live in whoredom or drunkenneſs, or in any other wicked courſe.

For wherever ſerious thinking and reflection is practiſed and continued, it never fails to produce reformation of life. It is very obſervable, that when Chriſtianity was firſt preached by our Saviour, it had viſible effects upon the hearts and lives of men; no ſooner did any one profeſs the goſpel, but he became a good man, a mortifier of all his carnal luſts and appetites, dead to the world and all the vanities of it. He deſpiſed all earthly pleaſures, and was ready to lay down his life for his lord and maſter, whenever called to it. It was then a ſtrange thing to hear of a lewd, vicious, debauched chriſtian. But in our days, tho' we have the ſame religion and doctrine preached, the ſame arguments enforced, the ſame aſſiſtance of God's grace and ſpirit afforded; yet we ſee very few of theſe effects among us. We can now believe the goſpel, communicate with the church in all her offices, hear our ſins reproved, our duty told us, and all the glorious promiſes of Chriſt diſplayed to us, with the dreadful threatning of God denounced againſt us, and yet ſtill continue the ſame perſons we were before, as vain and looſe in our converſation, as uncharitable and worldly minded, as wrathful, peeviſh, and cenſorious, as if we were ſtill in the darkneſs of heatheniſm, and the goſpel had never been preached to us. And what is the reaſon of this difference between the effects of the goſpel then, and now? Why the firſt Chriſtians did ſeriouſly conſider their religion, and weigh its arguments and motives, but we do not. They took up their Chriſtianity by choice, and we by chance or education. They, upon the profeſſion of the goſpel, made a diligent enquiry into the doctrines and duties of it, and the evidence for it; they conſidered the goodneſs and reaſonableneſs of the precepts, the greatneſs of the promiſes,

promiſes, and the mighty encouragements to holineſs and virtue which it laid upon mankind: And ſuch fruits and effects will always be produced, where the ſame conſideration and application of mind is uſed. Even in our days, as hardened and inſenſible as we ſeem to be, yet there is none of us, when brought to a ſerious conſideration of our own ways, and the concerns of our ſouls, but we preſently find ourſelves changed into another ſort of men; we have new thoughts, new deſires, new purpoſes, and reſolutions. This we ſee frequently in ſick perſons; they who have moſt deſpiſed religion, and the arguments of it, while they were in health, yet when they come to their ſick beds, and begin to be awakened by the apprehenſions of death, into a ſerious conſideration of their own ſtate, how ſtrangely are they affected? how much do they repent of their former actions? how abſolutely neceſſary doth virtue and a holy life then appear to them? how full are they of ſtrong reſolutions to amend their ways, if ever God reſtore them to health again? how earneſtly do they aſk God's pardon for what is paſt, and pray for his grace for the future? And what is the reaſon of all this? there was the ſame difference between virtue and vice, they had the ſame arguments to avoid the one, and purſue the other before, only they now deeply conſider and apply them to their own hearts, which before they did not.

And thus will it always be with all perſons, in all circumſtances, if they can once be brought ſeriouſly to reflect and conſider; this is a good ſtep made towards their repentance; and if they continue ſuch conſiderations, there is no doubt but they will at laſt become truly virtuous and holy perſons. Oh! that we would now begin to apply our minds ſeriouſly to our ſpiritual concerns, and entertain the ſame thoughts that we ſhall be

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ſure to have when we come to die! what trouble, care, and conſideration would it ſave us, and which will certainly ſome time or other come upon us! we cannot always live without thinking; a time will come, when we ſhall conſider, and reflect, whether we will or no; when we ſhall not be able to divert our thoughts from thoſe things, which we are now ſo unwilling to think upon, and perhaps when it may be too late. Happy they, who do with the prodigal, come to themſelves in time, before God's mercies be ſhut up againſt them! who will with him ſo conſider their ways, as to take up the ſame reſolution that he did, to ariſe and go to their father.

Diſcourſe

Diſcourſe C. Dr. *Rogers.*

The DUE IMPROVEMENT of our TALENTS.

Mat. xxv. 19.

After a long time, the lord of thoſe ſervants cometh, and reckoneth with them.

IN this parable, we have the meaſures of our duty to God, and the motives that enforce it, ſet before us, in an alluſion ſo plain and ſimple; in its views ſo extenſive and affecting; that while it inſtructs the meaneſt capacity, it engages reverence and attention from the greateſt, and ſtrikes an impreſſion on the moſt improved underſtanding. We are to conſider God, as our lord and maſter, the author and giver of every good gift; and ourſelves as his ſervants or ſtewards, who, in various inſtances and meaſures, have received from his goodneſs, ſuch bleſſings and abilities, as may fit us for the ſeveral ſtations and offices of life, to which his providence appoints us. But then we are to obſerve, that theſe are committed to us, as a truſt or loan, for whoſe due management we are accountable to the donor. If we faithfully acquit ourſelves of this probationary charge, we ſhall receive far greater inſtances of God's confidence and favour; but if we are remiſs and negligent, we muſt expect to feel his reſentment and diſpleaſure. A time will come, when the Lord will demand a particular account of every talent committed to us. And though this day of enquiry, is at a diſtance,

and that this life is allotted us for our trial; and our account will not be required, till this ſcene of action is cloſed; yet no one knows, when that great and final audit may begin. But, however diſtant the time may be, yet God has fixed and appointed it, "in whoſe ſight, a thouſand years are "but as one day." It will aſſuredly come, and our eternal happineſs or miſery depends on it; ſo that we ought to have the proſpect of it ever in view, and to live under a conſtant expectation of it.

Though theſe are the principal concluſions, to be collected from this parable; yet the divine author has adapted every incident of the relation, to convey to us ſome ſpiritual inſtruction. Hence we learn, that infinite wiſdom hath appointed the talents of men to be various, and in their kind and proportion, adjuſted to the diverſity of offices, neceſſary to human life. But though the gifts of men are unequal, yet none can with juſtice complain, ſince what is beſtowed, be it more or leſs, is a favour entirely unmerited. Each then ſhould be thankful, and ſatisfied with his portion; and inſtead of envying the more liberal allotments of another, apply himſelf to the improvement of his own. It muſt be obſerved, that the difficulty of the taſk, is according to the number of talen s committed to each. He who had received five, was required to gain other five; and he who had received ten, was to account for other ten: ought we then to complain, if our maſter has laid on us a lighter burden, a more eaſy and leſs ſervice, than what he has on others? Eſpecially, as our intereſt in God's favour depends not on the number of our talents, but on our diligence and application in the management of them. He who had received two talents and improved them, was "admitted into the "joy of his lord." And he who came laſt, was reproved, not for having fewer talents, but for not improv-

improving what he had, as others had done. So that the moral deſign of the parable, is to engage our utmoſt attention, to improve ſuch talents as God beſtows on us, whether great or ſmall, many or few, becauſe we muſt account for them, "when our "Lord ſhall come and reckon with us." That we may be enabled to make ſuitable reflections on this parable, it will be proper to conſider, what is meant by theſe talents; and what duty is required of us, for the improving and rendering an account to God of them.

By theſe talents are principally meant, the communications and graces of the Holy Spirit, which God beſtows in different meaſure, "dividing to "every man ſeverally as he will." And ſubordinate to theſe, are all the means, opportunities, and abilities to exerciſe or improve theſe graces; all the advantages of ſtation, fortune, education, and whatever may enable us to do good. For we having received all we have from God, are ſtrictly obliged to promote the wiſe ends, for which he beſtows his favour. And here let us take a ſhort and imperfect view of what God has done for us. He has given us reaſon and underſtanding, to diſcern good from evil, to enquire into the cauſes, relations, and conſequences of things; and to collect from thence, proper rules of judgment and actions. Indeed ſince the fall, this faculty has been much obſcured; but ſtill it remains an univerſal gift of God to men: and tho' not equal to all, yet it is given to every man in ſuch meaſure, as is ſufficient for their direction. In the knowledge of our duty, and the purſuit of happineſs, God has by the goſpel, ſo graciouſly ſupplied the defects of reaſon, that the meaneſt underſtanding may know how to be happy. Such aſſiſtances of divine grace attend every Chriſtain, if he will apply to God for it, as may enable him to direct his inclinations, govern his affections,

and ſubdue his corruptions. Theſe talents of nature, are in ſome degree common to all men; and by the improvements of that grace, which is conferred on every one, all have ſufficient to conduct them thro' the ſeveral ſtages of life; if they will but uſe proper diligence and application. But then regard muſt be had to all the means afforded for cultivating theſe gifts of nature and grace; ſuch as all opportunities of inſtruction, the miniſtry and ordinances of religion, the reproofs and examples of good men, the occaſions offered, and the abilities given, for the exerciſe of virtue. All theſe are talents, or gifts of God, depoſited with us, to be diligently made uſe of, and for which we are accountable to him. I proceed to ſhew what duty is required from us, in the improvement of theſe talents.

It is here ſuppoſed, that theſe talents are improveable; or otherwiſe they would be of no uſe, nor value. And, indeed, we are bound by the command of God, to improve them, who has threatened to inflict ſevere penalties if we neglect it. And if they are not improved, they will not continue long at one ſtay, but be loſt. The fineſt parts and capacities, without proper culture, will make but a mean and contemptible figure. No knowledge can be preſerved without uſe and exerciſe. And the ſame as to moral accompliſhments. It requires great care and attention to form a virtuous habit, and much more to preſerve it in vigour. Unleſs we co-operate with the motions of God's grace, and cultivate it by uſe and application, its impreſſions will gradually wear out, and be loſt. "The ſpirit of God will not always ſtrive "with man." He gives us a ſtock to manage, equal to the ſervices he expects from us; but if we are ſlothful and negligent, and will not apply it to the purpoſes for which it was given, he will recall the uſeleſs

uſeleſs gift. "Take from him, ſays he, the talent, "and give it to him, that hath ten talents." Let us therefore diligently improve every talent committed to us, becauſe this will be enquired of in the day of accounts, and if not improved they will be immediately taken from us. What this improvement implies, and how we may diſcharge this duty, is an enquiry of the neareſt concern to us.

The proper improvement of all God's gifts, is the employing them ſo, as may beſt promote his glory. This is the end the Almighty propoſed in our creation, in all the powers he has endued us with, and in all the aids of grace, he has vouchſafed us. Whatever other improvements we make of them will not profit us, nor be admitted as any proof of our fidelity, in the day of reckoning. We may cultivate our underſtanding by learning and ſtudy, and extend our knowledge thro' all the ſubjects of human enquiry; but if our end be only to gratify our curioſity, or our vanity, this is not ſerving God, but ourſelves. We may increaſe our portion of God's outward gifts; but if we only apply them to enlarge our own conveniencies, this is not the improvement our maſter expects. We may take pleaſure in our knowledge and fortune, rejoice in them as our portion and inſtruments of preſent ſatisfaction; but we muſt ſtill remember, that in our reckonings with God, all theſe improvements of our capacities and abilities, will be added to our receipts. And the only uſe God will permit us to ſet in ballance of our debt to him, is to employ them as means of increaſing and multiplying our graces, or as inſtruments of exerciſing them in works of piety and virtue. Every gift of God is capable of theſe applications.

By the advantages of learning and knowledge, we are enabled to excel in ſpiritual underſtanding; to defend the faith, explain and enforce the doc-

trines of the goſpel; to inſtruct the ignorance, and correct the errors of others. By riches and authority, we are enabled to ſupport, and promote the ſervice of God; to relieve the poor and indigent; to be a terror to evil-doers, and to protect and encourage thoſe who do well. When we thus apply God's gifts, as means and inſtruments to exercise the graces of his ſpirit; the zeal, juſtice, and charity, he infuſes into our hearts; theſe are improvements which God will own. He will immediately bleſs our fidelity, and render it fruitful in greater gifts, in more abundant meaſures of grace; and in the day of account will acknowledge it in proportionable allotments of reward and glory. This brings me to enquire how our Lord will then proceed with us.

And we may learn from this parable, that the divine juſtice in this ſcrutiny will eſtimate and reward every one's fidelity, in proportion to the receipts and return they have made. An account will be demanded of every talent; and it will not be ſufficient that we have made ſome improvement, unleſs it be ſuch, as is anſwerable to the number and value of our gifts. If he who has received but two talents, ſhall gain five, his approbation and reward from his maſter, will be greater than his who makes only the ſame improvement of five; becauſe the improvement made by the former, is in proportion to his receipts, more than double to the others. And from this ſentence here paſſed on the unprofitable ſervant, we may learn, that God will ſeverely reſent our unfaithful diſcharge of the truſt he repoſes in us. The ſervant who ſaid, "lo there thou haſt what was thine;" made uſe of a weak and falſe ſuggeſtion, becauſe the increaſe was as much due to the Lord, as the original ſtock; but he only rendered one moiety of what he owed, and was therefore condemned to utter darkneſs. And if this

this will be his portion, who preſerves his talent entire and undiminiſhed, but made no improvement of it, what ſentence muſt they expect, who ſquander away the principal itſelf, in trifles and vanity; or which is worſe, in affronting and diſhonouring God, or in the ſervice of his enemies? Alas! how many are there who abuſe the gifts of God to ſin, and make the abilities his goodneſs beſtowed on them, the inſtruments of offending him? how frequently do we ſee great endowments of mind or fortune, wholly devoted to the ſervice of mens luſts? and if the idle and unfruitful ſervant, who only ſat ſtill, when he ſhould have been active, ſhall be caſt into outer darkneſs; how heavy muſt we ſuppoſe their ſentence will be, who have been diligent and active in doing evil? who have deſerted to the adverſaries of God, and employed what they received from heaven, in rebellion againſt it? The judge of all the earth will aſſuredly do right, and proportion his reſentment to the aggravations of the crime.

The general view and intention of this parable, is to excite men to live and act under a ſerious, habitual regard to the event of that day, when our Lord ſhall come, and reckon with us. And then enquiry will be made of the good or bad management of thoſe talents he has committed to us. We ſhould therefore attentively reflect on the nature and number of God's gifts to us, and what improvement we have made thereof. We ſhould on each article, examine how we have acquitted ourſelves of the duties required from us: whether we have duly cultivated the ſeeds of grace, and with honeſt open hearts, received and obeyed its ſuggeſtions: whether we have diligently attended to the means afforded us of growing wiſer and better, have frequented the holy ordinances, and regarded

the teachers of religion: and what fruits theſe excellent means of improvement have produced. Are we advanced in ſpiritual knowledge and underſtanding, in piety and holineſs of life, in purity, meekneſs, and charity; in any proportion to the calls and aſſiſtances, the invitation and inſtruction, we have had? With reſpect to thoſe outward talents God has intruſted us with, have we faithfully employed them, in promoting his honour, in the exerciſe of Chriſtian graces, in ſuch works of devotion, juſtice, or mercy, as he requires by the goſpel? If on enquiry, our conſcience can acquit us, as diligent and faithful ſervants, we may then with joy expect our maſter's coming. But whatever improvements we have made, we muſt ſtill proceed farther, and "preſs forward to the high mark of our calling." For every progreſs in grace, tho' our own endeavours co-operate therein, is yet the gift of God, and an acceſſion to our talents; as it enlarges our abilities, and adds to our duty. And as to all ſuch as have been idle, and made no uſe of the talents God has given them, they may in this parable read their ſad fate, when their Lord comes, and finds them thus unfruitful. And the terrible proſpect ſhould awaken ſuch from their ſlumber; quicken them to an immediate and vigorous application to duty; that by a double improvement of the time yet remaining, they may redeem what is loſt.

But worſe, and more hardly to be retrieved, is his caſe, who has ſquandered away the ſtock itſelf; ſuffered his gifts to periſh for want of uſe; or by abuſing them to the ſervice of ſin, has provoked God to take them from him. How ſhall the prodigal recal the fortune he has ſpent, and appeaſe the anger of his judge? The terrors of the Lord may juſtly terrify him, but yet muſt not extinguiſh his endeavours in deſpair. He has loſt many excellent talents,

talents, but he who gave, can reſtore. If his heart be humbled with a true ſincere repentance, this is a gift of God; a gift thro' Chriſt, capable of great improvements, towards obtaining of divine mercy. This, alas! more or leſs, is the condition of every mortal. "If we ſay that "we have no ſin, we deceive ourſelves, and the "truth is not in us." For which of us hath improved every gift of God, ſo far as we might have done? or, if we had been faithful in ſome talents, how have we neglected others? The moſt circumſpect piety, will in the day of account want to have much to be forgiven; and muſt expect his reward, rather from the mercy of his judge, than the merit of his ſervice.

Let us then all by a ſincere contrition, ſhew forth fruits meet for repentance, by a diligent application of every remaining hour; remembring, that the judge ſtands at the door. The day of reckoning may be long before it comes, but the time allotted us to prepare for it, is limited by the ſhort ſpace of human life. The night of death comes when no man can work; and though many ages may paſs between that event and the reſurrection to judgment, yet when we leave this world, the days of probation expire, the account is then ſealed up, nor can we alter one article of it: to-day therefore, while it is called to-day, let us be diligent in the work of our Lord; correct our errors, and finiſh what is imperfect, that we may obtain his approbation, and make our calling and election ſure.

This laſt thing I ſhall obſerve with reſpect to this parable is, that the condition of thoſe who diligently improve theſe their talents, will be unſpeakably happy; but thoſe who do not, will be miſerable beyond expreſſion, both in this world and the next. The diligent improvers of their talent,

lent, will be truly happy both here and hereafter. In this world, a quiet and ſerene conſcience will be to them a continual feaſt; the ſenſe of having performed their duty to the beſt of their ability; of having been good ſtewards of that grace which God beſtowed on them; and that they can give a ſincere, through not a perfect account to their great maſter, when he comes to enquire into their behaviour and ſtewardſhip; this will fill their breaſts with infinite ſatisfaction, their ſouls will be calm, their thoughts at reſt, from a conſciouſneſs of their fidelity; and their life not embittered with anxious fear and dread of a ſad future reckoning. Beſides, this ſerenity and ſatisfaction of mind, and comfortable proſpect of a glorious recompence of reward, the improving Chriſtian ſhall have more talents given him, more grace beſtowed upon him; what the ſlothful forfeited, ſhall be conferred on him, and he ſhall abound in every good word and work. And what condition can approach nearer to the ſtate of heavenly glory, than that of a holy ſoul thus plentifully adorned with the divine grace? If grace and glory differ only in degree, and the one is but the completion and perfection of the other; a ſoul thus filled with grace muſt needs here enjoy a heaven upon earth.

And in that other world, when the glory ſhall be revealed, that is prepared for them that love and ſerve our Lord Chriſt in ſincerity; then will that happineſs be infinite and eternal. They will enter into the joy of their Lord, partake of his glories and felicities, in the preſence of the immortal God. Having given an account of their ſtewardſhip, they ſhall be conducted by the bleſſed angels, into the preſence of the great king of heaven, where they ſhall ſee him, face to face; and with admiring eyes and unraviſhed hearts, ſhall behold his glory, gaze upon his ſplendour, and nearly view his beauty,

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who is the fountain of perfection; and he who is light himſelf, will communicate the knowledge of his moſt excellent nature, and make them full of divine gladneſs, with the joy of his countenance. And ſince the reward of a pious induſtry, in improving the talents God has committed to us, will be ſuch an exceeding and eternal weight of glory; we ſhould take off our affections from theſe vain and worthleſs trifles, and not beſtow our love upon that which ſatisfieth not, nor ſpend our labour for that which is not bread; but make it our great endeavour to be rich towards God, to improve the talents he hath given us, and to lay up a treaſure in heaven; remembring, "that eye has not ſeen, "nor ear heard, neither can it enter into the heart "of man to conceive, the things which God hath "prepared for them that love him." And that diligence is ſurely well beſtowed, which ſhall be rewarded with "a crown of glory, eternal in the "heavens."

But this is not the caſe with the unprofitable and ſlothful ſervant, neither here nor hereafter. In this world, the laſhes of a guilty conſcience, will be to him a continual torment. The ſenſe of his having careleſsly neglected his duty, and not performed the juſt commands of his great Lord; that he has not improved the grace which God gave him, and is unable to give any good account of the talents committed to his charge; this will fill his mind with trouble and perplexity, and embitter all his worldly enjoyments with anxious fear and dread of a future reckoning: ſo that the dreadful expectation of his ſad fate, will be to him, even like hell upon earth; and in the next world, at the great day when he ſhall be ſummoned to give an account of his works, the terrible ſentence of "depart from me, ye curſed, into everlaſting "fire, prepared for the devil, and his angels," ſhall

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ſtrike him with horror and confuſion. He ſhall then be ſhut up in utter darkneſs, where he ſhall eternally bewail his miſerable condition, gnaſh his teeth in bitter remorſe, for ſlothfully neglecting the improvement of divine grace, and bringing himſelf to that place of torment; crying out to eternal ages in deſpair and moſt tormenting agonies of ſoul, "O that I had conſidered in that day, the things "that did belong unto my peace; but now they "are forever hid from my eyes."

To conclude this diſcourſe; in this parable we ſee on the one hand, all the encouragement given to diligence, induſtry, and an improving piety; with all the bleſſed attendants of abounding in grace in this world, and a full enjoyment of God himſelf in heaven; and on the other ſide, here is repreſented, what if duly conſidered is ſufficient to make any man afraid of ſpiritual ſloth and idleneſs, and not dare longer to neglect the improvement of his talents, leſt he is deprived of God's grace here, and be ſentenced to eternal miſery at the day of judgment.

Diſcourſe CI. Mr. *Balguy.*

DILIGENCE and INDUSTRY, ENFORCED and APPLIED.

Rom. xii. 11.

Not ſlothful in buſineſs.

EVERY man has two general concerns of great moment, to employ his thoughts, namely, the preſent life, and that which is to come. The one is indeed of much greater importance than the other. The buſineſs of eternity is of infinite conſequence, and requires out utmoſt diligence and care; not that the affairs of this life are to be neglected: worldly induſtry under proper reſtraints and regulations is a great friend to religion; and therefore well deſerves our conſideration. The true meaning of the text is, that men muſt not give themſelves up to idleneſs or ſloth, but diligently purſue their reſpective callings, and be induſtrious in that ſtate of life, which God has allotted them.

As mens different circumſtances and conditions require different degrees of induſtry and labour, it is not poſſible to mark out the bounds and limits of induſtry. Some are obliged to take more pains than others, whoſe condition of life exempts them from labour, by making it neither neceſſary nor expedient; and yet idleneſs is the privilege of none; but is criminal in itſelf, and prejudicial to all men, in many reſpects. But it muſt be obſerved, that worldly induſtry may be carried to exceſs, and become

become detrimental, as well to our health, as to the concerns of another life; which latter being by far of the greateſt moment, requires our utmoſt care and regard; ſo that we muſt make our ſpiritual calling and election ſure, whatever becomes of our temporal affairs. It will be needleſs to ſhew, how far men ought to be diligent and induſtrious, in their reſpective employments; becauſe every man who is convinced that he ought to be induſtrious, and reſolves ſo to be, may eaſily diſcover, how to proportion his induſtry to his condition and ſtate of life. But it ſhall be my endeavour to ſhew from theſe words, the neceſſity and advantage of induſtry; both as to our temporal and ſpiritual concerns. I begin with the firſt.

Let it then be conſidered, that the world cannot ſubſiſt without labour and pains; even thoſe who are exempted from the drudging part of buſineſs cannot be unemployed without great diſadvantage to themſelves and the public. The neceſſities of life require a great deal of pains, and the comforts and conveniences of it demand much more. Indeed, had God pleaſed, he might have maintained the world, without men's labour; by making ſuch proviſion for them, as to have ſupplied all their wants and occaſions, without their endeavours. The earth might have been made to yield its fruits and encreaſe, without any human care or cultivation; nature might have been made ſo rich and fruitful, as to have rendered art uſeleſs, and labour ſuperfluous. But providence has wiſely ordered matters otherwiſe. For conſidering the corruptions of our nature, ſuch a ſtate of eaſe and freedom, might have been fatal. Indeed, had man continued innocent, as when created, labour would have been needleſs; our firſt parents, while they remained in paradiſe, were provided with every thing,

thing, by the bounty of nature. The earth produced without care or culture, whatever could adminiſter to uſe or delight. But this privilege they loſt with their innocence; and by incurring guilt, became ſubject to labour: and part of Adam's curſe was, "to eat bread in the ſweat of his face;" which devolved upon his guilty poſterity; ſo that human labour has but an ignoble original. But then, this is no way in favour of idleneſs; for had man continued innocent, and not been condemned to labour, yet he would not have lived in ſloth. Employment would not have been wanting for his active nature. The works of creation, the unſearchable excellencies and perfections of the creator, would have found abundant exerciſe for the faculties of his mind. There would then have been more leiſure and inclination, as well as greater capacity, for ſo ſublime an employment. The puniſhment therefore of the above curſe only conſiſted, in the exchange of the exerciſe of the mind, for the labour of the body; and it is neceſſary it ſhould be ſo now, both in a natural and moral reſpect; in a natural ſenſe, becauſe, ſince man's expulſion from paradiſe, nature calls for his endeavours, and will not furniſh him with ſuch bleſſings as he wants, without his own labour; and in a moral reſpect, labour is greatly neceſſary, to keep him out of worſe employment. Had not man in this corrupt ſtate worldly buſineſs to engage ſome of his thoughts, they would naturally be employed about things unlawful. He has ſuch an averſion to good, and ſuch ſtrong propenſity to evil, that it is neceſſary he ſhould be ſome way employed. But this ſhall be more fully conſidered under the next head; which brings me to ſhew the advantages of induſtry.

To induſtry and diligence are owing the birth and improvement of arts and ſciences, which contribute ſo much to the uſe and embelliſhment of life.

life, and diſtinguiſhes man from the inferior rank of creatures. The nations deſtitute of induſtry, are barbarous and uncivilized, the countries wild and deſolate, and the men ſavages. There cannot be a flouriſhing people without induſtry. The benefits of nature, and the bleſſings of providence, muſt in a great meaſure be loſt without it. There are flouriſhing nations, that ſolely owe their power and proſperity under heaven, to a ſpirit of induſtry, which has raiſed and advanced them, in ſpite of many great obſtacles and diſcouraging difficulties; while other nations, bleſſed with many and great natural advantages, have never diſtinguiſhed themſelves, for want of taking the neceſſary pains: Their ſloth buried them in obſcurity, or they became a prey to other nations, and ſo loſt their riches and liberty, and fell a ſacrifice to their indolence and inactivity. As liberty is a great encourager of induſtry, ſo is induſtry the beſt guard to liberty. Strength and power avail nothing if not exerted, which they cannot be to advantage without pains and induſtry. Idleneſs naturally tends to ſlavery and poverty. An induſtrious people may expect the protection of heaven, whilſt the lazy are abandoned to their own ſluggiſhneſs. "The hand "of the diligent ſhall bear rule, but the ſlothful "ſhall be under tribute."

And as induſtry is beneficial to the public, ſo is it of great advantage to private perſons. It has a natural tendency to raiſe men in the world, for wealth cannot be acquired without it. Men indeed may inherit riches without taking pains, but cannot improve or keep them without induſtry. But thoſe who have their fortunes to make, may as well think to be wiſe without inſtruction, as rich without diligence. If a man's condition be very low, he muſt labour for a ſubſiſtence; if moderate, he muſt be induſtrious, to advance it. "The hand of

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" the diligent maketh rich; and the ſubſtance of " a diligent man is precious." He whoſe wealth is of his own acquiring, beſt knows the value of it, and how to ſpend it; and the bleſſings of heaven will proſper his honeſt labours and endeavours. " Wealth gotten by vanity ſhall be diminiſhed; " but he that gathereth by labour ſhall encreaſe." Both honour and wealth muſt be obtained by induſtry; which indeed, is the high road to preferment. It alſo tends to the preſervation of health; for our bodies are ſo framed, as to require conſtant exerciſe; no doubt contrived on purpoſe by providence, as a natural check upon ſloth, and a kind of ſecurity to buſineſs, that ſo no motive might be wanting to ſpur man on to that labour and induſtry for which he was deſigned. Sloth is an enemy to health, and moderate labour very beneficial to it. This truth is confirmed by experience; long life being moſt common among the laborious part of mankind; and was not health thus ſupported by buſineſs, the thread of life would be very ſhort. In truth, idleneſs is a dead weight upon a man's conſtitution. It loads him with infirmities, that naturally tend to ſhorten his days; as if nature deſigned, that he who did but little good in the world, ſhould be ſoon cut off, as an unprofitable member, and a nuſance to ſociety. We may then ſay of induſtry, as the wiſe man did of wiſdom, " length of days is in her right " hand, and in her left hand, riches and honour." Beſides,

We ſhould conſider the pleaſure and ſatisfaction which redounds from an honeſt employ. Thoſe who inure themſelves to buſineſs, like it ſo well, that they cannot live without it; which ſhews it muſt be pleaſant: and though gain may contribute to make it ſo; yet ſurely a man may take pleaſure in being induſtrious, for other views, than

barely the love of riches. His employment may be pleaſing and delightful to him, excluſive of other conſiderations. He may find great ſatisfaction in induſtry, as being part of his duty, pleaſing and acceptable to God; and as it enables him to do good, to provide for his own houſhold, which whoever neglects, is worſe than an infidel. So that a man may take pleaſure in his buſineſs, both upon its own account, and for the ſake of the many advantages attending it; and though hard labour is troubleſome and painful, yet cuſtom will make it eaſy, and much pleaſanter than conſtant idleneſs. To do nothing is the hardeſt labour, a ſtate the moſt reſtleſs and uneaſy; becauſe its contrary to the nature of a man's mind, which requires action: a ſlothful man's time is a great burthen to him, it hangs upon his hands, and he knows not how to get rid of it.

As reſt gives refreſhment to a laborious man, this makes hard labour to be better than idleneſs, becauſe it gives a man the true reliſh of reſt. The ſlothful man is glutted with his eaſe, but that leiſure, which the induſtrious man finds from buſineſs, is truly delightful to him. Indeed, labour and reſt do mutually recommend each other, both for the pleaſure of variety, and the agreeable ſucceſſion: when a man is weary with buſineſs, and his ſpirits are ſunk, when reſt arrives it is truly welcome: and when he is refreſhed, as his ſtrength and vigour return, ſo does his appetite to his buſineſs; and he goes to work with the ſame alacrity, as he came from it. This is natural and muſt be pleaſant to all, but the lazy and ſlothful. Providence ſeems to intend, that men ſhould have no true enjoyment of any bleſſing without labour.

I will now conſider induſtry with regard to religion; and certain it is, that the glory of God is highly promoted by it; a due improvement of his

his gifts and talents muſt neceſſarily redound to his honour. Induſtry diſcovers the wonders of nature, their various ends and uſes; and gives men a proper occaſion to acknowledge God's wiſdom in the creation of the world, to proclaim his power, and extol his goodneſs. Induſtry has alſo a great influence on the moral world. By a ſpirit of induſtry ſocieties and governments are framed, and wholeſome laws enacted; and by it the members of a community carefully execute their ſeveral and reſpective truſts and functions.——Induſtry is alſo a great friend to religion, as it enables men to do much good in a private capacity, to their neighbours, friends and relations; by putting it in their power to exerciſe acts of charity, to relieve the needy, and ſuccour the diſtreſſed. But the greateſt advantage of induſtry is, that it tends to the preſervation of innocence, by ſecuring men from the ill effects of ſloth. Idleneſs is the inlet to licentiouſneſs, vice and immorality. It corrupts the principles of religion, and opens a door to ſin and wickedneſs. The mind of man will not ſleep; his thoughts and paſſions muſt be employed; as he is prone to evil, nothing but employment will prevent his committing it. Idleneſs gives full ſcope to all ſorts of temptations; it draws men into ill company, expoſes them to all manner of ſin and vice, and to the prevailing influence of bad examples; and particularly to the temptations of their ſpiritual adverſaries, who will improve this grand opportunity, to facilitate and haſten men's ruin.

And as idleneſs diſhonours God, and is pernicious to man's ſelf, ſo has it a great tendency to make him injurious to his neighbour. An idle perſon to keep himſelf in countenance, and encourage his beloved ſloth, will hinder other men's buſineſs, and endeavour to get companions as idle as himſelf, or make them ſuch; and this perhaps is

the only inſtance of their taking pains. Thus by idleneſs is buſineſs interrupted to the detriment of the public, and other men often brought to ruin. But further; if a man be low in the world, idleneſs will keep him ſo; if he enjoys a fair fortune, it will ſoon be gone, and then he muſt either work, or do worſe. But as it is not likely he will work, he of courſe falls to ſtealing, to ſupply his wants at the eaſieſt rate; hence idleneſs brings men into the moſt enormous crimes, to the great detriment of the publick. Had induſtry nothing to recommend it, but to keep men juſt and honeſt, this would be a ſufficient character of it; and could nothing be ſaid againſt idleneſs, than that it tends to thefts, wrong, and injuſtice; this is enough to deter men from it.

Laſtly, Idleneſs tends to diſturb the peace of ſociety, by intermeddling with other men's concerns, kindling contentions, feuds, and animoſities, which generally end in difference and diſagreement: Did men mind their own buſineſs, they would have no leiſure to intermeddle with the affairs of others. The apoſtle obſerves of ſome, that they were diſorderly, "working not at all, but are buſy bodies." Such he exhorts, "that with quietneſs they work, and eat "their own bread." Induſtry is an excellent expedient for the maintenance of peace, love and unity. A diligent attendance upon men's callings and employments prevents thoſe differences, diſſentions and ruptures, which are the natural conſequences of ſloth and idleneſs. Thus we ſee how highly advantageous induſtry is to religion, by promoting many branches of men's duty; by ſecuring their innocence in general, and keeping them out of temptations, miſchiefs and ſnares, which they would otherwiſe unavoidably fall into. But then care muſt be taken, that while men apply themſelves ſo diligently to the affairs of this world they do not neglect the more weighty concerns of the next; leſt

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whilſt they are employed about "things temporal, "they finally lo e the things eternal." This brings me to ſhew from ſeveral conſiderations, the great obligations we are under alſo to diſcharge the duties of religion, to cultivate and improve our minds, in order to the working out our eternal ſalvation.

Let us then obſerve the ſingular moment and vaſt importance of this work, whereon depends our ſupreme intereſt, and well being for ever. The gain or loſs of a bleſſed immortality, is an event the moſt important: In compariſon of which, all temporal concerns are inconſiderable, vain and contemptible. A diſappointment in theſe ſhould not affect us deeply, becauſe they cannot effect us long; to aim at the good things of this world is not unreaſonable, but we ſhould not eſtimate them, beyond their true value. Many of the grievances of this life, are purely imaginary, and thoſe which are real are commonly much aggravated, by our own fancy. The demands of nature are little and few, ſoon ſupplied, and eaſily ſatisfied. Thoſe hardſhips and preſſures which are certain and unavoidable, may be greatly alleviated, by the ſhortneſs of their duration, by the encouraging hopes and proſpects of a happy futurity.

But if, by neglecting our immortal ſouls, we make little or no proviſion for eternity; if by depraving our faculties, and defacing the image of God, we neglect to improve his gifts; if we continue unprepared and unqualified for that bleſſed ſtate, which he has provided for his faithful ſervants; how deplorable and deſperate will be our caſe? Without remedy, without relief, without hope. To be for ever baniſhed from the preſence of God, and the habitations of the juſt, will be a loſs above all eſtimate; and yet we are as ſure as truth can make us, that vice and wickedneſs will

find no place in the regions of bliſs. A God of infinite purity and perfection can never ſuffer it; whoever aims at happineſs, and draws plans of proſperity, either preſent or future, excluſive of virtue, forms vain and deluſive projects. He might as well ſeek light in the grave, or liberty in a dungeon. It is impoſſible for a rational creature to be made happy without virtue; and yet an eternity of the greateſt happineſs depends on our virtuous improvements. The ſtate of bliſs, which is offered to our choice, is unſpeakably perfect, and of endleſs duration; which is an infinite addition to the weight and ſtrength of the motive; ſo that this affair moſt highly concerns us, and is of the utmoſt importance. It is impoſſible to frame an idea of any thing equal to it. A perpetual poſſeſſion of the greateſt happineſs we are capable of, is a good ſo immenſe, ſo entirely compleat, that it fills and ſurpaſſes all our deſires, and leaves nothing to be wiſhed. It therefore deſerves our principal care, and moſt earneſt endeavours to obtain this mighty good; and the only qualification for it, is a virtuous courſe of life. But,

The neceſſity of great care and diligence in the diſcharge of our duty, further appears from the extent of it. For it comprehends a variety of particulars, and none to be neglected; and requires conſtant perſeverance to our lives end. In the cultivating of our minds, many things are to be learned, others unlearned; many prejudices to be weeded out, and many errors extirpated. The precepts of virtue and religion muſt be reduced to practice. The ſeveral branches of our duty muſt be deeply impreſſed on our minds; the obliquity of our wills muſt be rectified; our weak humours, wild appetites, and wandering inclinations muſt be carefully watched; our natural affections muſt be governed, our acquired ones reſtrained. The heart

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must be kept with all diligence; an habitual guard must be put on our words, actions, and thoughts. There it is our designs are formed, whether good or bad; and if our thoughts are not cautiously watched, and governed, by the rules of sobriety and virtue, they will soon become licentious; great circumspection is therefore necessary to regulate these springs of action, and prevent the first tendencies to evil.

With respect to our fellow-creatures, various duties are incumbent on us; for we ought to consult the interest of the community, and the welfare of individuals. We must inviolably obtain the rules of justice and equity. We must deal with all men truly and uprightly, without fraud, guile, or dissimulation; conscientiously doing to others, "what we would they should do to us;" performing as far as possible, in word and deed, the obligations of truth and righteousness. We must cultivate a kind and benevolent disposition; a charitable and merciful frame of mind; doing good unto all men, as opportunity offers; endeavouring to promote the peace and prosperity of mankind. In short, we are obliged to be grateful to our friends, placable to our enemies, and well affected to all.

Another principal branch of our duty is to walk humbly with our God; to have a deep sense of our own meanness and unworthiness, and of his transcendent majesty and boundless perfections. That we frequently and devoutly contemplate the excellence and glory of his nature and attributes; that we carefully consider the wonderful operations of his hands; reflect how great he is in himself, and how good to us; that he bestows upon us a variety of enjoyments, and crowns us with mercies spiritual and temporal. Our hearts thus disposed we shall naturally approach him with profound reverence, gratitude, and adoration; chearfully pay-

ing him that homage and worſhip, praiſe and thankſgiving, which are due to his great name. We muſt alſo place our entire truſt and confidence in him, and with abſolute reſignation ſubmit to his will; performing ſincere obedience to his laws, and devoting ourſelves to his honour and glory. And when ever we fail herein, violate our obligations, and tranſgreſs our known duty; we muſt make up the breach by ſincere repentance, and effectual reformation. But if we abuſe his Chriſtian privilege, it becomes uſeleſs, and we are only unprofitable penitents. From this imperfect ſketch we may ſee how copious and comprehenſive our duty is; and how it requires our conſtant attention, and moſt vigorous endeavours; ſince the culture of our ſoul will not admit of indolence; for that many virtuous habits and Chriſtian graces muſt be formed and planted; nor ſhould this be eſteemed a hard duty. For if we chearfully take ſuch pains for the ſmall advantages of this ſhort life; ought we to do little or nothing, for a bleſſed immortality? Does not ſuch a prize deſerve an induſtrious preparation, when the profits are infinite and the reward endleſs?

Another reaſon for our diligence and application in religious concerns, ariſes from the ſhortneſs and uncertainty of this preſent life. So precarious is our continuance here, that we cannot aſſure ourſelves of one day or hour. How often is the thread of life broken by various accidents, and unavoidable misfortunes, beſides the havock made by vicious courſes? But ſuppoſing the natural period of man's life accompliſhed; what is it at beſt but a ſpan; and how is that nothing ſhortened by continual avocations; by the demands of nature, and the cares of this world, which conſume the greateſt part of our time; leaving but a ſmall portion for the concerns of the ſoul, and the improvements

of religion. Indeed, in the midſt of our temporal employments, our thoughts might often be turned towards objects of a higher nature. It is an eaſy tranſition, from the creatures to the creator; from the works of nature to the power, wiſdom and goodneſs of their great author: if we did not want will, we could ſeldom want opportunities for this. But we are apt to think ourſelves entirely in our own power, and that virtue may at any time be eaſily purchaſed. This ſhews how little we are acquainted with the excellence of the one, and the impotency of the other. To purify and cleanſe our ſouls from every pollution of ſin and ſenſe, ſo as to obtain the graces and accompliſhments which the goſpel requires; and to fit them for heaven and eternity, is not ſo eaſy as we are apt to imagine. Indeed, without a more than common care and attention, how can we think to be duly qualified for the ſociety of angels, and ſaints made perfect; or to be made partakers of that glorious inheritance? But,

We are apt to deceive ourſelves about the ſufficiency of our preparation. We know in general, that without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord; that without renovation of mind and purity of heart, all our hopes are vain; and what we have done amiſs muſt be undone, and a real reformation effected; that good habits and virtuous diſpoſitions muſt be fixed and cheriſhed; and the love of God and goodneſs rooted in the ſoul. This we all know whenever we pleaſe to conſider; and yet ſo weak or wilful are we, as to content ourſelves with faint reſolutions, feeble endeavours, and to build our hopes on the moſt uncertain foundation. But let us conſider, that if we fall ſhort of what is abſolutely neceſſary to ſalvation, the conſequence is utter ruin; whereas, ſhould we exceed in any part, the conſequence will be not only ſafe, but vaſtly beneficial to us. If then we have any regard to our

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own welfare, we ſhall ſtrive ſo to run the race of this ſhort life, that we may obtain the prize of everlaſting life.

It appears from the foregoing conſiderations, that we have all poſſible reaſon to act with our whole might, to exert our utmoſt endeavours, in the execution of this great concern; if we only conſider it on the foot of ſelf-intereſt. If relying on the aſſurances of reaſon and revelation, we firmly expect an immortal ſtate hereafter, we may refer it even to the deciſion of ſelf-love, what is fit to be done, and how we ought to proceed. Let us conſider but for one moment, what eternity is, and how it may be enjoyed. And then let us doubt if we can, whether we ought not to be in earneſt with our duty: or where our true intereſt lies, and our principal treaſure ought to be laid up. If to enjoy for ever the greateſt happineſs we are capable of, be not our chief and main concern; our faculties entirely delude us, words have no meaning, and things no reality. The enjoyments of this world are in compariſon, neither ſolid nor durable; for though they ſmile in proſpect, they ſeldom ſatisfy in poſſeſſion. If then we toil and take pains to acquire ſuch precarious periſhing things; how can we think any care too great, to ſecure a bleſſed immortality? And ſince ſo much depends on our ſucceſs; our diligence, our perſeverance, our utmoſt efforts, cannot but be well and wiſely employed. To ſerve God, and diſcharge our duty as penuriouſly as we can, is being dangerouſly frugal; ſince a partial eſtimate may blaſt all our hopes, and ruin us forever. In our temporal concerns, we ſtrenuouſly exert ourſelves; to obtain what at the beſt is ſmall and uncertain. Whereas in the preſent caſe, the recompence is ſure, and immenſely great. We have divine ſecurity for it, that what we ſow in this life, we ſhall reap ten thouſand fold, in the next.

next. Such an object as this will juſtify the moſt ardent affection, and demand the higheſt pitch to which our deſires can riſe. When ſuch treaſures, ſuch glories are in view, moderation is mere folly, and ambition true wiſdom. To conclude; if we really mean ourſelves good, and wiſh our own welfare; if we deſire to promote our true intereſt in the beſt and moſt effectual manner; let us earneſtly ſtrive to obtain and fit ourſelves for that ſtate, where every thing will concur to complete our condition, and crown our deſires: that we may finally partake with joy unſpeakable, of thoſe ſtreams of bliſs, thoſe rivers of pleaſure, which flow for ever at God's right hand.

Diſcourſe CII. Abp. *Tillotſon.*

The NATURE and INFLUENCE of the GOSPEL PROMISES.

2 Pet. i. 4.

Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promiſes; that by theſe ye might be partakers of the divine nature.

THE chief and principal of thoſe great and excellent promiſes, which Chriſt hath made us in the goſpel, are, the forgiveneſs of our ſins, upon our faith and true repentance; the aſſiſtance of God's grace and holy ſpirit here, and eternal life hereafter. The ſcripture contains full and clear promiſes, that if we believe the goſpel, forſake our ſins, and amend our wicked lives, we ſhall be forgiven all that is paſt, thro' the merits of our bleſſed Saviour. The light of nature, conſidering the mercy and goodneſs of God, gave men good hopes, that upon their repentance God would forgive their ſins, and turn away his wrath from them. But mankind being yet doubtful of this, they uſed expiatory ſacrifices to appeaſe the offended deity. The Jewiſh religion allowed of expiation, only from ſuch tranſgreſſions as proceeded from ignorance and inadvertency, but not for ſins of preſumption. If men ſinned wilfully, there was no ſacrifice appointed by the law for ſuch ſins. But the grace of the goſpel juſtifies from the greateſt ſins, upon our faith and repentance. For all who believe in Jeſus, are

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" juſtified from all things, from which we could not " be juſtified by the law of Moſes." There was no general promiſe of pardon, nor way of expiation under the law; perfect remiſſion is clearly revealed to us only by the goſpel.

Another great promiſe of the goſpel is God's grace and holy ſpirit to aſſiſt our obedience. " Our " heavenly father will give his holy ſpirit to them " that aſk him." The apoſtles and Chriſtians of the firſt ages, had indeed an extraordinary power to publiſh the goſpel, and give confirmation to it, which is not to be expected now the Chriſtian religion is ſettled, and that theſe miraculous gifts are ceaſed. But yet the ſpirit of God doth ſtill concur with the goſpel on the minds of men, to excite and aſſiſt them to what is good. And tho' this operation is very ſecret, and not in that ſudden, ſenſible manner as in the firſt times of Chriſtianity, and ſo as to account for the manner of it, yet the effects of it are very ſenſible and common, to influence Chriſtians in all ages of the world. The aſſiſtance of God's holy ſpirit is ſtill neceſſary, to incline and enable us to that which is good; but not in that degree it was at firſt neceſſary: Becauſe the prejudices againſt Chriſtianity are not now ſo great, and many of thoſe advantages which were wanting at firſt, are now ſupplied in an ordinary way. So that it is not reaſonable to expect the ſame extraordinary operation on the minds of men now, which we read of in the beginning of Chriſtianity. And as to the promiſe of eternal life, to reward our obedience, this the ſcripture ſpeaks of, as the great promiſe of the goſpel. " This is the promiſe which " he hath promiſed, even eternal life." The new covenant of the goſpel is preferred before that of the law, becauſe it is eſtabliſhed on better promiſes. The particular ſpecial promiſes of the law were of temporal good things; theſe were the great encouragements

ments give to obedience under that imperfect diſpenſation. But now "godlineſs hath not only the "promiſe of the life that now is, but of that which "is to come." The goſpel hath clearly revealed a happy ſtate of immortality after this life, of which men had before but very obſcure and doubtful apprehenſions. "Our Saviour hath aboliſhed death "and brought life and immortality to light thro' the "goſpel." Holy men had good hopes of it before; but they had no ſure diſtinct apprehenſions of it; no ſuch full aſſurances, clear and expreſs promiſes of it, as the goſpel affords. Hence it appears, that the great promiſes of the goſpel, are the free pardon and forgiveneſs of our ſins, upon our faith and repentance; the help of God's grace and holy ſpirit to aſſiſt our obedience; and the promiſes of eternal life and happineſs as the reward of it. Theſe three are the moſt eminent promiſes of the goſpel, or what the apoſtles call "exceeding great and precious promiſes, whereby we may be partakers of the divine nature."

And if we conſider the condition mankind was in, when God was pleaſed to make ſuch gracious declarations, we ſhall ſee great reaſon highly to eſtimate every one of theſe promiſes. Mankind was then extremely degenerated, all fleſh had corrupted its ways; the whole world was guilty before God, and liable to the wrath and incenſed juſtice of the Almighty. Nor could they recover themſelves out of it by repentance and future obedience, would God have accepted thereof. But the promiſes of the goſpel removes the difficulties and diſcouragements which mankind lay under. The gracious promiſes of pardon frees us from guilt, and ſecures us from the dreadful wrath of God; without which mankind would have been under the greateſt doubts and diſcouragements. For when men are afraid their ſins are greater than will be forgiven, they

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are apt to deſpair, which ſtate is an effectual bar to repentance; a deſperate condition which makes men not to value what they do. And the promiſe of God's grace and holy ſpirit, to aſſiſt and enable us to do our duty, fully anſwers all the diſcouragements and objections, from our own weakneſs, and the power of temptation. We may do all things thro' Chriſt ſtrengthening us; and tho' weak, we are yet ſtrong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. If God be for us, who, or what can ſtand againſt us? Tho' the devil is a powerful enemy, yet the holy ſpirit of God, who is always ready to help us, when we do not refuſe his aſſiſtance, is more powerful than he. "Greater is he that is in us, "than he that is in the world." The ſpirit of God dwells in all who are willing to admit him, and is ever ready to aſſiſt thoſe who comply with his bleſſed motions, and vigorouſly exert their own endeavours. And as to the promiſe of erernal life, that anſwers all the difficulties of our obedience, and prevents all worldly threats from having power to change our conſtancy to God and his truth. A wiſe man will contentedly ſuffer any thing, on terms of greater advantage. And what motive ſo powerful to encourage our conſtancy and obedience, as the promiſe of eternal happineſs? Well therefore might the apoſtle call theſe exceeding great and valuable promiſes; ſince without them our redemption and recovery had been extremely difficult, if not abſolutely impoſſible.

But then it ought to be obſerved, that theſe promiſes are only conditionally made. The promiſe of the grace and aſſiſtance of God's holy ſpirit, is on two conditions. Firſt, that we earneſtly beg it of God. This our Saviour expreſſes, by aſking, ſeeking, and knocking, which ſignifies the importunity of our requeſts. Our heavenly father will give his holy ſpirit to them that thus aſk. Secondly, that we improve

prove the grace which God affords. "To him that "hath ſhall be given, and from him that hath not "ſhall be taken away, even that which he hath." That is, to him that uſeth the grace which God affords, more ſhall be given; but from him who makes no uſe of it, ſhall be taken away that which he hath. And as to pardon of ſins, the ſcripture plainly ſuſpends that, on the general condition of repentance and amendment of life. "Re-"pent, that your ſins may be forgiven you," and on the condition of our forgiving others: "If we for-"give not men their treſpaſſes, neither will our fa-"ther forgive our treſpaſſes." And as to the promiſe of eternal life; that is made on the condition of faith, repentance, and perſeverance in well-doing. Our Saviour ſays, he that believes, or whoever effectually aſſents to the doctrine of Chriſt, and lives according to the truth of it, ſhall be ſaved. For Chriſt is the "author of eternal ſalvation, only to them that obey him." So that none ſhall be ſaved by Chriſt, but thoſe that obey the goſpel. "Without holineſs none ſhall ſee the Lord." "To them who by patient continuance in well doing, ſeek for glory, and honour, and immortality, God will give eternal life; but to them that are contentious, and obey not the truth, (that is the goſpel) but obey unrighteouſneſs; indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguiſh, ſhall fall upon every ſoul of man that doth evil." So that the promiſes of the goſpel are conditional, and we cannot be partakers of them, unleſs we perform thoſe things which are required on our part; for it would be moſt abſurd to imagine that God ſhould grant us forgiveneſs of ſins, and eternal life, let our behaviour be what it will.

As to the time when we may apply theſe promiſes to ourſelves, that muſt be, when we are certain of having performed the conditions of theſe promiſes. When we ſo truly repent of our ſins,

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as to forsake them, and lead a new life; when we sincerely forgive those who have offended us, and have no animosity against them, or thought of revenge; then we have a right to the promise of pardon and forgiveness, and God will blot out our transgressions, and remember our iniquities no more. When we constantly and earnestly implore the assistance of God's holy spirit, and faithfully make use of that strength and assistance which God affords us: When we make it our constant and sincere endeavours to please God, to "walk in all the ordi-"nances and commandments of the Lord blameless, "to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live "soberly, righteously, and godly in this present "world;" then, and not before, we may with comfort and joy apply to ourselves these exceeding great and precious promises of the gospel. This is a plain account of our confidence and good hopes in the promises of God; but to apply any promise to ourselves, before we have performed the condition required of us, is not faith, but fancy or presumption. Having thus considered the nature of the gospel promises, I will now shew what influence they ought to have on us, that by them we may be made partakers of the divine nature.

To be partakers of the divine nature, is in scripture signification, to be of a divine temper and disposition, to have our corrupt natures rectified and purged from all sinful lusts and passions, from all vicious and corrupt affections. So that we are made partakers of the divine nature, by cleansing ourselves from the lusts of the flesh, or in the apostles words, from the corruption that is in the world thro' lust; and by a diligent endeavour after all Christian graces and virtues. And that this is the proper influence and efficacy of the gospel promises, on the hearts and lives of men, the apostle fully declares; "Hav-

" ing therefore theſe promiſes, dearly beloved, let us " cleanſe ourſelves from all filthineſs of the fleſh and " ſpirit." From the luſts of the fleſh and uncleanneſs, from all evil and corrupt affections of the mind; ſuch as wrath, envy, malice, hatred, ſtrife, revenge, cruelty, pride, and the like; perfecting holineſs in the fear of God: continually aſpiring after greater degrees of holineſs, virtue, and goodneſs, which are the great perfections of the divine nature. By thus conſtantly and ſincerely endeavouring to "cleanſe our-" ſelves from all impurity of fleſh and ſpirit, and by " practiſing all the virtues of a good life," we ſhall by degrees raiſe and advance ourſelves to a godlike temper and diſpoſition; imitating in all our actions, the goodneſs, mercy, patience, truth, faithfulneſs, and all thoſe other perfections of the divine nature, comprehended under the term holineſs. To this ſtate the goſpel deſigns to raiſe us, and thoſe exceeding great and precious promiſes, which I have mentioned, are greatly inſtrumental thereto, in the following inſtances.

By their internal efficacy and aſſiſtance, inclining and enabling us to do what is good. For God's holy ſpirit is promiſed us, in conſideration and commiſeration of that impotent, weak, and depraved condition, into which mankind is ſunk; to help us who are without ſtrength, to recover ourſelves from that miſerable ſtate, into which we are fallen by our own wilful tranſgreſſion; " to quicken us who are " dead in treſpaſſes and ſins; to raiſe us to a new " ſpiritual life," and to carry us thro' all diſcouragements: To excite us to our duty, and enable us to perform ſuch difficult parts of obedience, as are moſt contrary to our natural inclinations; to bear down the ſtrength of ſin and temptations; and to make us victorious in all our conflicts with the world, the fleſh, and the devil, and all the powers of darkneſs: in a word,

word, to be a principle within us, more mighty and powerful than the luſts and inclinations of our evil hearts; than the moſt obſtinate and inveterate habits of ſin and vice; than all the temptations and terrors of ſenſe. So that if we will make uſe of the aſſiſtance which God affords us in the goſpel, and become workers together with God, we need not deſpair of victory and ſucceſs; for God will continually give us more grace, whereby the force and violence of our luſts will be abated, and we ſhall encreaſe from ſtrength to ſtrength. The holy ſpirit of God will open our hearts to receive the light of divine truth; will repreſent ſuch arguments and conſiderations as are apt to perſuade us to embrace and yield to it, by ſecret and gentle reprehenſions; ſoftning our hard hearts, and bending our ſtubborn wills to a compliance with the will of God and our duty. This the ſcripture calls our regeneration and "ſanctification, turning us from darkneſs to light, and "from the power of Satan unto God." It will alſo lead and direct us in the ways of holineſs and obedience; it will quicken our devotion, ſtir up holy deſires and diſpoſitions in our ſouls, ſupport and comfort us in our afflictions and ſufferings; and ſeal and confirm to us the bleſſed hopes of eternal life. Thus the ſpirit of God carries on the work of ſanctification, and makes us partakers of a divine nature, by way of inward efficacy and aſſiſtance.

The promiſes of the goſpel are alſo a powerful motive and argument to engage us to "cleanſe our-"ſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit, and to "perfect holineſs in the fear of God." For a full pardon of what is paſt is a mighty encouragement, a ſtrong argument to perſuade us to amend our lives. If God, whom we have ſo highly provoked, is not only willing and ready to forgive us, but to provide and purchaſe for us the means of our pardon by

the grievous ſufferings of his dear Son, and freely to offer and earneſtly invite us to be reconciled to him; the conſideration of this ought in all reaſon and gratitude to melt us into ſorrow and repentance, and a deep ſenſe of the evil of our ſins, and to inflame our hearts with a mighty love to God and our bleſſed redeemer, "who hath loved us and waſhed "us from our ſins by his own blood." This ſhould make us reſolve never more to offend a God ſo merciful and gracious, ſo ſlow to puniſh, and ſo ready to forgive; it ſhould effectually engage us to a dutiful, conſtant, and chearful obedience to all his commandments: it ſhould make us infinitely afraid to ſin any more, leſt a worſe thing come to us, and we relapſe into an incurable ſtate, more full of guilt and miſery. And the promiſe of God's grace and holy ſpirit, is likewiſe a very powerful argument and encouragement to holineſs and goodneſs; engaging us to cleanſe ourſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit, that ſo our ſouls may be a fit temple for him to dwell in; encouraging us hereto by the conſideration that we have a guide ſo unerring to counſel and direct us; an aſſiſtant ſo powerful to ſtrengthen us with might in the inner man, to ſtand by us in all conflicts with ſin and Satan; and to make us more than conquerors over our ſpiritual enemies. For tho' we are weak, our luſts ſtrong, our enemies and temptations many, mighty and violent; yet we need not be diſheartned, ſo long as God is with us, whoſe holy ſpirit is ſufficient for us, againſt all the ſtrength of ſin and hell. Tho' our duty is hard, and our ſtrength ſmall; yet we cannot fail of ſucceſs, when the omnipotent grace of God is always ready to aſſiſt our ſincere but weak endeavours. Laſtly, the promiſe of eternal life and happineſs, if duly weighed and conſidered, is of mighty force to diſengage us from the love and practice of ſin, to encourage

encourage our obedience, " and patient continu-
" ance in well doing." The aſſurance of enjoying unſpeakable, endleſs happineſs, and of eſcaping extreme and eternal miſery, cannot fail of checking all temptations to ſin, and of removing all difficulties and diſcouragements in the way of our duty.

And if heaven and hell will not weigh with, and make impreſſion on us, it will be in vain to uſe other arguments. If the hopes of perfect comfort, joy, and felicity, eternal in duration, and vaſt beyond imagination; " ſuch as eye hath not ſeen, nor
" ear heard, nor hath entered into the heart of man
" to conceive: Or if the dread of God's terrible wrath, the vengeance of eternal fire, together with the unſupportable torments of a guilty conſcience, the perpetual ſtings of bitter remorſe and anguiſh, for the wilful folly of our wicked lives, and the horrible deſpair of ever getting from ſo miſerable a ſtate; if neither, or both of theſe conſiderations, will prevail on us, to ceaſe to do evil, and to reſolve to do good, ſo as to obtain the one and eſcape the other; there is no hope that any words, arguments and conſiderations will work upon us. He that is not to be tempted by ſuch hopes, nor terrified by ſuch fears, is proof againſt all the force of perſuaſion in the world. I ſhall conclude all with a few uſeful reflections. And,

If we expect the bleſſings and benefits of theſe exceeding great and precious promiſes of the goſpel, we muſt be careful to perform the condition required of us. It is a great miſtake, and of dangerous conſequence to the ſouls of men, to ſuppoſe the goſpel is all promiſes on God's part; and that we have nothing to do but to believe them, and then rely on God for the performance of them. That the Chriſtian religion is only a declaration of God's good will to us, without any expectation of duty

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from us; this is an error of a very pernicious nature. The three great promiſes of the goſpel before mentioned, are expreſsly contained in our Saviour's firſt ſermon on the mount. The promiſe of bleſſedneſs is there often repeated, tho' not abſolutely made, but on certain conditions required on our parts; as repentance, humility, righteouſneſs, mercy, peaceableneſs, meekneſs, patience. Forgiveneſs of ſins is alſo promiſed; but then it is only to thoſe who penitentially acknowledge and aſk forgiveneſs for them, and are ready to grant that forgiveneſs to others, which they beg for themſelves. The gift of God's holy ſpirit is likewiſe there promiſed; but it is on condition of our earneſt and importunate prayer to God. The goſpel is full of precepts, enjoyning duty and obedience on our part, as well as promiſes of bleſſings on God's part. St. Paul in a few words declares upon what terms we may expect that ſalvation which the goſpel offers. "The grace of God which bringeth ſalvation hath appeared to all men; teaching us, that denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly and righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world; looking for that bleſſed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, who gave himſelf for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

And from hence we alſo learn, that if the promiſes of the goſpel do not make us partakers of the divine nature, it is becauſe we are wanting to ourſelves. God is always ready to do his part, if we fail not in ours. There is a divine power and efficacy which attends the goſpel, to prepare the hearts of men to entertain it, unleſs they put a bar and obſtacle thereto. If men will reſiſt the motions of God's ſpirit, quench its light, and obſtinately oppoſe the force of truth, God will withdraw his

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grace from them. The intent of the goſpel is to raiſe us to the perfection of all virtue and goodneſs: and in order to attain that end, its promiſes are wiſely adapted to aſſiſt the infirmities and weakneſs of human nature; "to renew us after the image of "God, in righteouſneſs and true holineſs;" to deſtroy ſin and vice, to allure us to goodneſs, to aſſiſt and encourage us in the practice thereof. But if we will not comply with God's gracious deſign manifeſted in the goſpel, and ſuffer theſe promiſes to have a due influence upon us; we wilfully deprive ourſelves of all the bleſſings and benefits of it; "we "reject the counſel of God againſt ourſelves, and "receive the grace of God in vain;" and by rejecting and deſpiſing his promiſes, we provoke him to execute his threatnings upon us.

Laſtly, if the promiſes of the Chriſtian religion do in their own nature tend to make us like God, and to reſemble the divine perfections; by making us good, juſt, merciful, patient, and holy, in all manner of converſation; if this is the proper tendency of the goſpel and its promiſes, how ſhould the conſideration upbraid the degenerate ſtate of the Chriſtian world, which ſo abounds in all kind of wickedneſs and impiety? So that we may ſay, as one did on reading the goſpel; "either this is not the goſpel which we read, and the Chriſtian religion which we profeſs; or, we are no Chriſtians." So far are we from having attained to that pitch of goodneſs and virtue, which the Chriſtian religion recommends, that too many of us are degenerated into very beaſts; wallowing in abominable filthy luſts, indulging ourſelves to that degree, in thoſe diabolical paſſions of malice and hatred, ſtrife and diſcord, revenge and cruelty, ſedition and diſturbance of the publick peace; as if the grace of God had never appeared to teach us the contrary. It therefore concerns all Chriſtians, for the honour of

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their religion and the ſalvation of their ſouls, to demean themſelves otherwiſe; to depart from the vicious practices of this preſent evil world; "to "have their converſation as becometh the goſpel of "Chriſt," that if poſſible they may prevent the impending judgments of God, or at leaſt "ſave them-"ſelves from this untoward generation."



FINIS.